

OPEN SPACE ELEMENT

THOUSAND OAKS GENERAL PLAN



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OPEN SPACE ELEMENT
of the
THOUSAND OAKS GENERAL PLAN

City of Thousand Oaks
Department of Planning and Community Development
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This document is a comprehensive revision of the Open Space Element of the Thousand Oaks General Plan, as originally adopted in 1972 and as amended to date.



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PREFACE

The Thousand Oaks Planning Area encompasses the distinctive and picturesque City of Thousand Oaks, a community nestled in the Conejo Valley, a small coastal valley in the foothills at the northwest end of the Santa Monica Mountains. Thousand Oaks is surrounded by mountains, traversed by creeks and dotted with knolls, hillsides, oak woodlands, and native grasslands. This environment supports diverse wildlife and vegetation habitats, including large mammals, as well as rare and endangered species unique to the local area. In addition, these natural open spaces provide important linkages with the surrounding geography. A comprehensive open space plan is needed to assure the conservation of these vital resources, to protect the integrity of the natural ecosystem, to preserve the natural beauty of the community's natural open space, and to enhance the City's visual character, which also provides a significant economic resource.

Official Citizen Attitude Surveys, conducted regularly since 1968, have shown that residents consistently rank open space as the City's foremost asset, and that citizens clearly and overwhelmingly want open space to be preserved in perpetuity.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

State law mandates that cities and counties adopt an Open Space Element and a specific Action Plan to implement the City's goals to preserve open space for the health, safety and welfare of the public. Open space preservation is necessary to maintain the economy of the state, to assure the continued availability of agricultural and mineral resources, for the enjoyment of scenic beauty, and the use and conservation of natural resources and recreational opportunities.

The State Legislature in 1970 realized that rapid growth in the state would put extreme development pressures on cities and counties, and acknowledged that resource conservation must be an active part of a City's General Plan to direct growth away from sensitive ecological areas.

The Open Space Element is a tool to carry forth the Thousand Oaks vision to protect open space, direct growth and maintain the community's character and enviable quality of life. This Element identifies the open space resources that should be protected and specific methods to protect them.

Some open space areas containing resources such as wetlands, trails, scenic vistas, large animal habitat, and oak groves have become lost to development. Preservation of designated open space areas will require stronger controls and a concerted effort to protect them in perpetuity. Only through consistent implementation of a comprehensive Open Space Element, supported by ordinances and other protective measures, can its preservation for future generations of Conejo Valley residents be assured.

Under State law, local government cannot issue any building permit, or approve any subdivision map unless the proposed construction or subdivision is consistent with the local government's Open Space action program.

This Element satisfies a State planning law requirement calling for an Open Space Element in all county and city general plans. Sections 65560, 65561, and 65562 of the California Government

Code are provided in Appendix A.

Purpose of the Open Space Element

The purpose of the Open Space Element is to state the local planning policies for the use of unimproved land or water for: (1) the preservation of natural resources, (2) the managed production of resources, (3) outdoor recreation, and (4) the enhancement of public health and safety. By law, the Open Space Element must also include an inventory of those lands and resources, as well as an "action program." This program must contain specific techniques to protect from development both public and private open space lands which are identified as prominent and necessary to achieve the open space policy goals.

Definitions and Terminology

State law defines "open space land" as any parcel or area of land or water which is essentially unimproved and devoted to an open space use. (See Section 65560(b) of the California Government Code in Appendix A for the State's complete definition of open space).

1. Open Space

Consistent with this intent, the term "open space" shall mean any area designated by the City to preserve the City's natural resources and open space character. Such lands include scenic ridgelines and steeply sloping hillside terrain, arroyos and barrancas, lakes, creeks, riparian vegetation, floodplains, ecologically diverse native plant and animal communities that include rare and endangered species, critical habitat linkages and movement corridors that are necessary for the local and regional linkages and movement corridors important to the dispersal of wildlife populations, farming and grazing, historic and archaeological resources, and passive recreation areas.

Within the local government context, Section 9-13.102(b) of the City's Municipal Code defines City-owned "open space." The following definition, which is hereby incorporated in the Open Space Element as a definition of open space, is patterned after the Municipal Code's definition cited above.

"Open space" land shall mean land which has been designated for the preservation of the surface of that land in essentially an open, natural, and undeveloped state. Open space may contain limited improvements and uses which are compatible and consistent with open space use.

For purposes of applying the policies and implementation programs of this Element, specific land is considered to be "open space" if any one or more of the following apply:

- (1) The deed, recorded tract map, or other instrument transferring the property designates the property as open space, or some document appurtenant to the transfer stipulates that the purpose of the transfer is to maintain the property as open space;
- (2) The City Council declares by resolution that the property is open space. Said resolution may be adopted before, concurrent with, or after the acquisition of the property by a public agency;
- (3) The City Council has placed the property in the Open Space (OS) Zone, as defined by Article 36 of Chapter 4 of this Title.

Open space is considered a permanent classification which is intended to continue as such in perpetuity without fundamental change. Policy OS-19 herein provides limitations on changes to open space.

2. Open Space Element

This section of the City's General Plan is the "Open Space Element." Like other parts of the General Plan, it articulates the City's policies and programs regarding its long-term physical development, in this case pertaining to the topic of open space. State law requires all cities to have General Plans, with specific "elements" to address topics such as land use, circulation, housing, open space, conservation, safety and noise. Cities may include other elements in their General Plans to address other important local topics related to the long-term physical development of the community.

3. Open Space Zone

The Open Space (OS) Zone is a specific City zoning district. Like other City zones (e.g. R-1, R-P-D, C-2, M-1), it is defined by a specific Article in the Zoning Ordinance of the Municipal Code, which sets forth regulations regarding permitted uses and development standards for properties located within the zone. Property located within this zone is "zoned Open Space." Properties can be placed in the OS Zone through a zone change, which requires City Council adoption of an ordinance following a public hearing, and consideration and recommendation by the Planning Commission.

4. Open Space Zoning Ordinance

This is a specific term used in the State law. All cities and counties are required to adopt an "open space zoning ordinance consistent with the [Open Space Element]." As described in Chapter 5, the City's open space zoning ordinance includes the OS Zone, and other regulations which require the preservation of open space in land development (Hillside Planned Development Zone), protect ridgelines (Protected Ridgeline Overlay Zone), and establish procedural requirements relative to City-owned open space.

5. Open Space System

The open space system is land within the City's Planning Area, comprised of both existing and future natural open space lands and lands which are improved for outdoor recreation purposes, including parks and golf courses. The improvements consist primarily of introduced landscaping for recreational use, with limited structural coverage of the land. Figure 3 depicts the open space system.

Care must be taken not to confuse undeveloped property (whether privately- or publicly-held) with open space. Designations of the Land Use Element of the General Plan and zoning for such property may permit development at some subsequent point in time.

The open space system presently includes about 13,100 acres of natural open space and 1,500 acres of active open space (e.g., parks and golf courses). Another 1,300 acres of open space are expected to be added to the system in the future. At buildout of the General plan, the open space system will comprise about 41% of the Planning Area's total acreage.

Relationship of the Open Space Element to other General Plan Elements

A General Plan must be internally consistent, meaning that none of its parts (principally the various elements) should conflict with any other part. Each Element must have equal status with other elements, and the policies and measures designed to implement one or more elements must mutually support those of the other elements in achieving the overall goals and policies of the General Plan. For example:

While the Land Use Element describes the City's desired character and size, the Open Space Element describes natural resources that should be protected within and around the City. The Recreation Element's main purpose is to plan for indoor and outdoor recreational facilities (such as parks, playfields, and community centers). The Open Space Element's main goal is to protect resources such as wildlife habitat, scenic, and agricultural land, with a secondary goal of

providing recreation where it will not harm the environment or interfere with agricultural operations. Significant open space and ecological resources should be appropriately designated in the Land Use Element, to facilitate compliance with the policies identified in the Open Space Element.

The following text is included within the Open Space Element of the General Plan, as required by Ordinance 1265-NS, adopted by the City Council on June 18, 1996. The term “Land Use Map” refers to the Land Use Element map of the General Plan. “Parks, Golf courses, and Open Space” is a land use category in that Element.

The “Parks, Golf Courses, Open Space” category (not to be reconsidered until after the Year 2030) identifies those lands that are designated for Parks, Golf Courses, Open Space on the Land Use Map.

The target date of 2030 associated with the Parks, Golf Courses, Open Space designation indicates a review date after which “Parks, Golf Courses, Open Space” designated lands may be reconsidered for urban uses. However, during the life of this plan as amended by initiative, it is intended that only parks, golf courses, open space uses are permitted on these lands. Furthermore, any updates to this Plan are not intended to imply that development would necessarily be appropriate at that time.

CHAPTER 2

BENEFITS OF OPEN SPACE

Vast open space areas serve a variety of critical functions in maintaining the balance of nature and the well-being of man, not the least of which are serving as habitat for wildlife, preventing soil erosion, maintaining air quality, controlling water runoff, serving as the subject for art and educational study, and providing opportunities for hiking, fishing, biking, horseback riding, and bird watching. Open space also plays an invaluable role in community development by delineating the urban edge where development ends and open space begins, thus preventing the sprawl of urbanization.

Wildlife Preserving wildlife resources requires preserving land in open space because any form of wildlife must have a habitat. Loss or alteration of habitat is a major cause of various forms of extinction.

Another critical function of open space is to provide wildlife movement corridors. Movement corridors are habitat linkages utilized by wildlife species to gain access to preferred foraging, water sources, nesting, and breeding areas. In order to maintain their populations in a healthy condition, animals must have access to these critical areas. In the Conejo Valley, these corridors also function as important access routes around developed areas to undeveloped parcels.

Vegetation	Plant and vegetative resources should be carefully conserved because of their importance for wildlife habitat, for watershed protection, for climate moderation, for erosion control, and for their scenic beauty. Open space affords permanent protection to biologically diverse native plant communities including rare and endangered species. Vegetation prevents erosion and flooding which, in turn, enhances both the quality and quantity of groundwater and surface water resources. It also improves and maintains air quality within the surrounding community by producing oxygen and filtering air pollution. More direct benefits of preservation of plant resources include the development of valuable medicines (some of which have been derived from rare plants) and improved agricultural productivity (resulting from successful cross-breeding of wild and domestic plants).
Archaeology	Knowledge of the past is a part of everyone's basic heritage. Open space in Thousand Oaks preserves archaeological and historic resources including significant prehistoric inland Chumash archaeological sites and historic structures. Safeguarding such resources links the community with its history.
Education	Open space is a valuable educational tool. Certain states, such as California, require environmental education as a component of elementary school curriculum. Scientific research, including biological studies of habitats and species diversity, provides invaluable knowledge.
Trails	While modern society offers many types of recreation which can occur outdoors, open space provides an important type of recreation for residents who seek quiet solitude and the beauty of nature.
Scenic Resources	The city of Thousand Oaks is rich in its scenic beauty. Open space is essential to preserve the spaciousness and attractiveness of the Conejo Valley. The scenic qualities of the Conejo Valley give our City its unique natural attributes. These are acknowledged and incorporated throughout the General Plan elements and in ordinances to protect and enhance the area's scenic qualities which contribute significantly to our quality of life.

**Wetlands
and Riparian
Lands**

Wetlands and the riparian lands which border them are one of the most biologically productive habitats. They provide important breeding grounds for waterfowl and are an essential water source for wildlife. In addition to valuable habitat, these lands protect water quality by reducing runoff, allow groundwater recharge, and help control flooding. Loss of over 90% of Southern California's wetlands has dramatically reduced the natural ability of water bodies to filter impurities and has been a major factor in the decline of water quality.

**Orderly
Growth and
Maintenance
of the
Economy**

By directing where urban development should occur, Thousand Oaks is also defining areas that should remain as open space. Preservation of historic, scenic, social, cultural, and hazardous areas in permanent open space provides for the well-being of the community. Areas which are to remain in open space include major ridgelines, steeply sloping hillside terrain, oak groves, sensitive ecological systems, major barrancas and watercourses. Additionally, one of the goals of the General Plan calls for the completion of a ring of open space surrounding the City. The benefits of excluding development from these identified areas of open space creates a more livable City and maintains the beauty of the Conejo Valley.

In recent years, cities experiencing the strongest economic growth are those judged to be most livable, a definition that includes environmental quality and open space.

**Public
Health and
Safety**

An important function of open space is land which is set aside as a buffer to separate people and buildings from intermittent or persistent hazards which could cause injury, damage, or death. Such lands also have potential for other uses. Lands along fault lines, for instance, can be retained in their natural condition as wildlife corridors; lands within pipeline rights of way can be used as trail easements; flood control facilities may be suitable for use as natural open space or recreation. For an in-depth discussion of these areas, please refer to the Safety Element of the General Plan.

CHAPTER 3

OPEN SPACE ISSUES AND POLICIES

This chapter addresses important issues related to the required topics of an Open Space Element, as well as important local open space issues.

A. Open Space for Preservation of Natural Resources

One of the guiding principles of the General Plan, specifically amplified in the Open Space and Conservation Elements, is to accommodate urban development within the Planning Area in such a way that valuable and important natural resources are preserved.

The location and extent of specific natural resources of importance to the community are identified in the Conservation Element, along with applicable policies and implementation measures pertaining to each. These resources include streams and creeks, wetlands and riparian habitat, wildlife corridors and key habitat areas, significant biological resources, such as oak woodland, rare and endangered species, cultural and historic resources, certain topographic features such as steeply sloping land and ridgelines, and scenic resources.

Where the Conservation Element identifies resources of particular importance and sensitivity requiring the preservation of an area in an essentially undisturbed state to successfully conserve the resources, then incorporation into the open space system is recommended.

Policy

OS-1 Open space shall include those areas which are identified by the Conservation Element as necessary to preserve in an essentially undisturbed state, except for restoration and enhancement activities which may be desirable to improve the site's resource value, for purposes of natural resource protection.

B. Open Space Used for the Managed Production of Resources

The Thousand Oaks Planning Area contains very limited areas where natural resources of economic or other significance are suitable for extraction or harvesting purposes. Examples of such resources within a state-wide context include timber, agricultural lands important for the production of food and fiber, groundwater recharge areas, commercial fisheries, mineral deposits, oil and gas reserves and sand and gravel deposits. There are presently no locations within the Planning Area where such resources are produced in an economically viable way.

Because of soil conditions and other factors, the Planning Area is not particularly suited to large-scale agricultural operations which could be characterized as the production of food and fiber. The City has, however, established two agricultural preserves within the Planning Area, comprising a total of 298 acres, and entered corresponding Land Conservation Act (LCA) contracts, upon request of the property owners. These sites are both classified as nonprime agricultural land. The LCA contracts provide property tax benefits to the owners, in exchange for their agreement to keep the property in agricultural use or open space for a 10-year period. The term of such contracts automatically renews each year for an additional year, so that there is always a 10-year term.

At the landowner's option, however, the automatic extensions can be stopped by filing a "notice of non-renewal." In such cases, the contract expires ten years from that date, and the land may then be used for other purposes consistent with local plans and regulations. Land subject to these restrictions is considered "transitional" open space, because the restrictions imposed by the Contracts are temporary.

While there is no need to set aside open space within the Planning Area for the production of any of these resources, it is appropriate to establish policies related to the potential use of open space for such purposes in the future.

These policies deal with the issues of (1) whether and under what circumstances land within the open space system should be considered for the managed production of natural resources, and (2) the City's support for agricultural preserves within the Planning Area where requested by property owners.

Policies

OS-2 Generally, land within the Planning Area is not suitable for the managed production of natural resources which are present on or under the surface, including timber, mineral, sand and gravel, and oil and gas resources.

- OS-3 *Groundwater recharge areas and extraction systems may be permitted within open space only if they are beneficial to regional water conservation and groundwater replenishment efforts and not detrimental to the function and resources of the open space system.*
- OS-4 *The City shall accommodate property owner requests for the establishment of agricultural preserves and execution of Land Conservation Act contracts. It is recognized that such devices in themselves constitute only a temporary (10 year) restriction on development; therefore these areas are considered "transitional" open space.*

C. Open Space for Outdoor Recreation and Education

Outdoor recreation within natural open space areas provides opportunities for enjoyment of the scenic beauty present in many components of the open space system, as well as opportunities for healthful exercise and learning about nature. Hiking and riding, limited camping, and picnicking are examples of outdoor recreation opportunities available in many units of the open space system. One of the key purposes of the open space system is to enable the development of a trails system within and extending beyond the Planning Area, which will permit enjoyment of the system by hikers, equestrians and bicyclists.

In addition, the Conservation Element establishes policies and implementation programs for the protection of cultural and historic resources. Where appropriate, inclusion within the open space system is a means to assure on-going preservation of such resources and to reflect their value in providing outdoor recreation and educational opportunities. Important examples of open space for this type of outdoor recreation include the Stagecoach Inn historic site, Satwiwa Native American Indian Culture Center, and the Oakbrook Chumash Interpretative Center in Oakbrook Regional Park.

These types of outdoor recreation activities are for the most part associated with large tracts of natural open space, and the focus of this section of the open space element is on appropriate recreational use of natural open space lands.

Policies related to other types of recreational open space, such as parks, playfields, and golf courses are not contained in the open space element. In these areas, recreation is the primary purpose, rather than the use and enjoyment of essentially undeveloped open space land, and the community's goals, policies, and standards for the recreational use of these facilities are contained in the Recreation Element of the General Plan and the Conejo Recreation and Park District's Master Plan.

Policies

- OS-5 The degree of public access, and the nature, extent, and design of facilities necessary to provide access to, and enjoyment of, open space areas, such as trails, trailheads, information kiosks, signage, parking, camping areas, and other visitor facilities and improvements, shall be dictated by the nature and sensitivity of the specific open space area. Such improvements, where necessary and warranted, shall blend unobtrusively with the natural setting.*
- OS-6 Trails are a key component of the Open Space Element. A master plan of trails providing appropriate controlled access to open space within the Planning Area, and connecting to the regional trail system, is incorporated in the Conejo Recreation and Park District Master Plan. This master plan of trails is hereby incorporated as a component of the Open Space Element. In carrying out its responsibilities, the City shall support completion of this trail system in a manner compatible with the other policies of this Element.*
- OS-7 Outdoor recreation activities within open space shall be planned to avoid adverse impact on nearby locations.*

D. Open Space for Public Health and Safety

Open space includes land which should be set aside in order to protect life and property from natural hazards. A description of the types of hazards which are present within the Planning Area, and the types of activities necessary to protect life and property from them is presented in the Safety Element.

Where protection from a hazard requires that land be maintained in basically an open undisturbed state, then the affected land is included within the Open Space Element. Incorporation of such lands in the open space system typically serves other open space purposes, such as habitat preservation or preservation of scenic resources.

Examples of components within open space which protect public health and safety include stream channels and barrancas, flood plains, slide-prone areas, and fuel management zones.

Policies

- OS-8 *Open space shall contain those areas, such as flood plains, areas of unstable slopes, and fuel modification zones which are identified by the Safety Element as necessary to remain in an undeveloped state for the purposes of maintaining public safety.*
- OS-9 *Where fuel modification zones necessary to protect people and structures from wildfire hazard are acquired by a public agency as open space, then on-going maintenance shall be provided by the property owner or successor in interest, with no obligation or liability accruing to a public agency.*
- OS-10 *Open space managers should work cooperatively with other public agencies including, but not limited to, the Ventura County Fire Protection District to implement fuel modification zones, conduct vegetation management and prescribed burning programs where appropriate, and to designate and plan fire protection access, including helipads and fire roads, within natural open space areas in a manner which provides effective protection to the public and also protects the natural environment.*
- OS-11 *The City supports regional efforts to designate and preserve large areas of open space beneficial to the protection of regional air quality.*

E. Open Space and Urban Form

The natural setting of the Conejo Valley provides an opportunity to use open space to shape the urban form of the City, to define relationships with neighboring cities, and to support regional planning. The City has embraced this opportunity, through the general development policies of the General Plan, and through inter-governmental efforts. Under the General Plan, the basic form of the community is one of development clustered in lower-lying areas within the Valley, while the hills and mountains surrounding the community are set aside in a ring of natural open space. Furthermore, the City supports greenbelts and other buffers beyond the Planning Area boundary, separating Thousand Oaks from the nearby cities of Camarillo, Moorpark, and Simi Valley, and from the unincorporated areas of Lake Sherwood and Hidden Valley.

The City's Planning Area is bounded in many instances by mountains or hills which naturally divide it from other areas. These topographic features are generally less tolerant of development and have therefore been allocated to open space or to very low intensity development. An important exception to this condition is the easterly Planning Area boundary, which follows a jurisdictional line (Ventura/Los Angeles County line) rather than a natural

topographic boundary.

This natural setting lends itself to coordinated planning not only because of the opportunity to define urban form through natural boundaries, but also because the setting defines a logical area for infrastructure planning (e.g., water supply, wastewater, drainage, roads) and reinforces a sense of community.

Through the dynamic open space programs of the City and other public agencies, the City is able to take advantage of this opportunity to shape urban form. In addition, the "ring" of open space at the periphery of the Planning Area supports goals and policies of the Conservation Element relating to habitat protection and wildlife movement corridors.

Policies

OS-12 In its activities to implement the General Plan, the City shall strive to create and maintain a connected ring of natural open space surrounding the developed portions of the Planning Area, complemented by the preservation as open space of significant hillside and ridgeline areas within the Valley. Achievement of the policies relating to the ring concept is an important factor to be considered in decisions regarding appropriate land use and the acquisition of open space.

OS-13 The ring of open space is a planning principle. Where it is depicted on maps, its location and extent are conceptual and it is not intended to pre-designate specific individual parcels or groups of properties as open space.

OS-14 The City shall support implementation of cooperative regional planning efforts, such as greenbelt agreements, which reinforce and extend the ring of open space, as well as low intensity rural agricultural land use, beyond the Planning Area boundaries.

OS-15 To further reinforce the ring of open space planning principle, the City shall support efforts by State and Federal agencies to acquire and beneficially manage open space in the vicinity of the Planning Area, and to work to preserve regional wildlife habitat linkages.

OS-16 Both within its Area of Interest, and in the larger regional setting, the City shall continue to support policies and programs (e.g., the Guidelines for Orderly Development) that encourage urban development to locate within cities and that preserve regional open space in order to preserve valuable elements of the natural environment, to produce food and fiber, and to guide urban form.

F. Open Space Preservation and Stewardship

Chapter 4 inventories natural open space within the Planning Area. As that chapter shows, many public and private entities are responsible for stewardship of open space. Private entities consist primarily of homeowners or property owners associations, managing common lots which are restricted to open space by development regulations and deed restrictions. Public agencies include the following:

- City of Thousand Oaks
- Conejo Recreation and Park District
- Conejo Open Space Conservation Agency
- County of Ventura
- Mountains Recreations and Conservation Authority
- Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy
- National Park Service
- State Department of Fish and Game
- United States Fish and Wildlife Service
- United States Army Corps of Engineers

Historically, the City's policy towards open space ownership and management provided that most of the open space system would remain in private hands. The bulk of the system identified in the Open Space Element adopted in 1972 was deemed to be subject to development constraints which would preserve the land in essentially its natural state.

In addition, at that time the City already had in place several regulatory tools designed to protect sensitive natural features, enabling the preservation of open space in private ownership. These include the Hillside Planned Development (HPD) zone with its slope/density and slope/open space restrictions and special development standards, the cluster development provisions of the Residential Planned Development (RPD) ordinance, as well as General Plan and Municipal Code policies discouraging grading in slopes over 25% natural grade and providing for oak tree protection.

In 1977, the City and the Conejo Recreation and Park District entered a joint powers agreement to form the Conejo Open Space Conservation Agency (COSCA) for the purpose of conserving open space lands, coordinating local land use and resource management decisions, and providing a community focal point for achieving open space and conservation goals. Since both component agencies had significant interest and responsibilities for open space management, it was logical to combine resources for the overall benefit of the community. The formation of COSCA preceded the establishment of the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area and the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy. It occupies a unique place in the larger regional

system of open management, and is a model for other agencies.

Over time, the open space ownership policy has evolved to one generally favoring public ownership. The reasons for this shift include the following:

- As more interest in open space as a recreational resource developed, it was realized that public ownership and control was desirable to provide recreational opportunities, properly regulated to preserve sensitive resources.
- An agency was in place to provide coordinated planning and management of open space areas.
- The core of publicly-owned open space in 1972 (Wildwood Park and Oakbrook Regional Park) began to expand rapidly with the acquisition of the Los Robles Open Space by the City in 1973 and the Hope Open Space by the CRPD in 1974. In the mid-1980's, COSCA received gifts of open space land from the Prudential Insurance Company totaling several thousand acres, which solidly established a major public ownership presence, and provided a critical base for future planning and expansion.
- Transfer to public ownership has advantages to the private property owner by shifting maintenance and management responsibilities.

This update of the Open Space Element articulates policy toward ownership and management of natural open space.

Open Space (O-S) Zone

When the Open Space Element was adopted in 1972, the City's "open space zoning ordinance" comprised a variety of zoning regulations, principal among which were (1) the Hillside Planned Development (HPD) zone, which required certain lands to be set aside as open space, and (2) the Public Lands (P-L) zone, which provided a "home" zoning district for lands which were dedicated to a public agency as open space. These zoning tools were consistent with the policies of that time, which favored retention of open space in private hands.

In 1991, the City adopted a more refined and specific open space zoning ordinance (Section 9-4.3600 et. seq. of the Municipal Code), entitled "Open Space Zone (OS)." This zoning district is tailored specifically to natural open space lands, and its regulations are restrictive as to the permitted improvements and uses which may be implemented for such lands.

Subsequently, the City processed two City-wide zone change cases (Z 91-660 and Z 91-661) to re-zone publicly-owned and privately-owned natural open space parcels into the OS zone. At this writing, approximately 7,200 acres of land within the City are zoned OS.

Irrespective of the ownership of land classified as natural open space, such properties should be considered for O-S (Open Space) zoning.

Policies

- OS-17 Land set aside as natural open space shall be retained as such in perpetuity for the long-term benefit of the community and the environment.*
- OS-18 Generally, natural open space land should be transferred to public ownership, to provide consistent management, linkage with other components of the open space system, and appropriate recreational and educational opportunities.*
- OS-19 Policies of public agencies which own and manage open space should require a public hearing by the governing body prior to any proposed sale, exchange, other disposition, lease, grant of easement, or construction of improvements which are inconsistent with passive recreation uses, with respect to such open space. Such actions should generally be allowed only in very limited circumstances where there is substantial community benefit, and the action complies with other policies of the General Plan.*
- OS-20 Certain natural open space units are appropriate for private ownership and management. These principally include smaller, isolated parcels, which will not readily be integrated into the larger open space system. Privately-owned open space should be subject to appropriate deed restrictions, with the City as a beneficiary, to assure its continued protection.*
- OS-21 Continue the transfer of natural open space parcels owned by the City and the Conejo Recreation and Park District to COSCA to facilitate specialized and consistent planning and management of open space resources.*
- OS-22 Generally, land which is set aside as natural open space land should be zoned O-S (Open Space), in order to provide appropriate and consistent legislative controls on land use and improvements.*

G. Open Space Management

Open space must be managed wisely to protect and preserve its natural features, while providing recreational and educational opportunities to the community. Proper management includes the establishment of policies and procedures which guarantee that the land which is set aside as natural open space is so maintained for the long term.

The nature and type of public access which can be accommodated in open space will vary depending upon the sensitivity of the resources and the possibility of external impacts. Protecting the quality of the open space itself should be the paramount factor in management decisions pertaining to natural open space areas.

Policies

Land which is set aside as natural open space, whether in public or private ownership, should be managed in accordance with the following policies. Where appropriate, the agency having jurisdiction over the open space should prepare and adopt a management plan consistent with these policies.

OS-23 Roads should only be permitted within or traversing natural open space areas where depicted by the Circulation Element of the General Plan, or where easements for such purposes are in place when the open space land is set aside.

OS-24 In determining the nature and extent of visitor use permitted within natural open space, protection of natural resources within the open space shall be the over-riding factor. All forms of hunting or trapping shall be prohibited, except hunting conducted under the auspices of a public agency for public safety purposes and live trapping which is necessary for purposes of scientific study conducted by, or under the auspices of, a public agency and which does not result in injury or death to the animal. Use of poisonous baits shall be prohibited except when used by open space property owners for purposes of rodent control.

OS-25 Facilities necessary to serve visitors, such as trails, trailheads, access roads and parking lots, kiosks, restrooms, signage shall be designed and installed so as to have no impact on sensitive natural resources within the open space area, and minimal impact on non-sensitive resources. Where emergency facilities or public service and utility facilities must be located in a natural open space area, they and any necessary access roads shall be located and designed to minimize impacts.

- OS-26 Significant plant and animal habitats should be identified and prioritized for needed enhancements and restoration in a cost-effective manner.*
- OS-27 Locations where open space resources are vulnerable to degradation due to off-road vehicular access, illegal dumping, or other damaging activities should be identified and measures to protect the open space developed.*
- OS-28 Continue efforts to protect water quality of streams located within open space areas from adverse effects associated with recreational use; since the streams and creeks within open space drain the Conejo Valley in general, continue to implement and improve programs and measures to reduce pollution stormwater and nuisance water pollution.*
- OS-29 Accommodate all trail users safely and provide a range of scenic experiences and degrees of difficulty, with the larger objective of protecting natural resources within open space areas, and minimizing man-made intrusions in open space. Exclude motor vehicles from trail use, and appropriately regulate trail use as necessary in order to maintain safety and to protect both the natural environment and trail improvements.*
- OS-30 Open space managers should work cooperatively with the utility companies, water agencies, and the Ventura County Flood Control District to assure that facilities subject to their jurisdiction are planned and designed in a manner which provides effective public service and also protects the natural environment.*
- OS-31 Natural drainage courses should be protected within open space areas. Use of concrete or other flood control improvements in natural drainage courses is discouraged, and should occur only when no reasonable alternatives can be found that would maintain natural hydrological and ecological functions.*
- OS-32 Plan new developments to avoid direct and secondary impacts on valuable open space resources, including appropriate access control, and location and maintenance of brush clearance areas.*

COSCA has adopted Management Policies and Guidelines (May, 1989) for open space resources under its care, which are incorporated in the Open Space Element by reference. As conditions change and more experience in managing open space resources is gained, these policies and guidelines should be refined and updated as necessary.

CHAPTER 4

THE OPEN SPACE SYSTEM

This chapter defines the Open Space System of the General Plan and inventories land which is, or is expected to be, set aside as open space as the community develops.

A. Delineation of the Open Space System

The open space system delineated by the General Plan includes natural open space lands, existing parks, future parks for both active and passive recreation, golf courses, and a system of equestrian, hiking, and bicycle trails linking sections of the Planning Area with each other, and with regional trails systems, such as the National Scenic Trail System.

Open land is critically important to preserve and enhance the Conejo Valley's unique beauty and spaciousness. The great majority of natural open space lands have been, and will continue to be, set aside within development projects in compliance with local land use policies and regulations, or donated by property owners. In this regard, the City has adopted several amendments to the Municipal Code to assure appropriate control over intensity of use and to establish suitable standards for hillside development. In those instances where land must be purchased to protect open space, guidelines are included in Appendix B of this Element to evaluate and rank areas for acquisition. An acquisition and financial implementation plan is included in Chapter 6 of this Element.

The Open Space System was designed at the onset of the General Plan process to address the common goals of the citizenry to have adequate open space and recreational facilities to meet the long-term needs of the community. The adopted goals and policies of the General Plan include three goals directly related to the Open Space System. These are:

1. To enhance and preserve the spaciousness and attractiveness of the Conejo Valley;

2. To provide a permanent park and recreational system of sufficient size and quality to adequately serve the Valley's future needs consonant with rising expectations of the community;
3. To provide a high quality environment that at all times is healthful and pleasing to the senses of man and to understand the relationship between the maintenance of ecological systems and the general welfare of the people of the Conejo Valley.

The policies of the General Plan and the designations of the Land Use Element define the Open Space System to include existing and future parks, golf courses, and small pockets of residentially developable land at very low density. This Open Space System is intended to be a continuous and contiguous "ring" concept, providing a greenbelt around the perimeter of the City, surrounding areas of development rather than just areas of open space within developments, and extending into the community, preserving lower slopes and meadow areas as buffers from adjacent developments, adjoining parks and school sites. In addition to the contiguous large open spaces, the linkages of open space would encompass a system of trails and corridors for the preservation of the natural environment and allow the migration of wildlife and people within the ring of open space. This open space network encourages land use patterns which stimulate necessary development while protecting environmental quality and curbing urban sprawl.

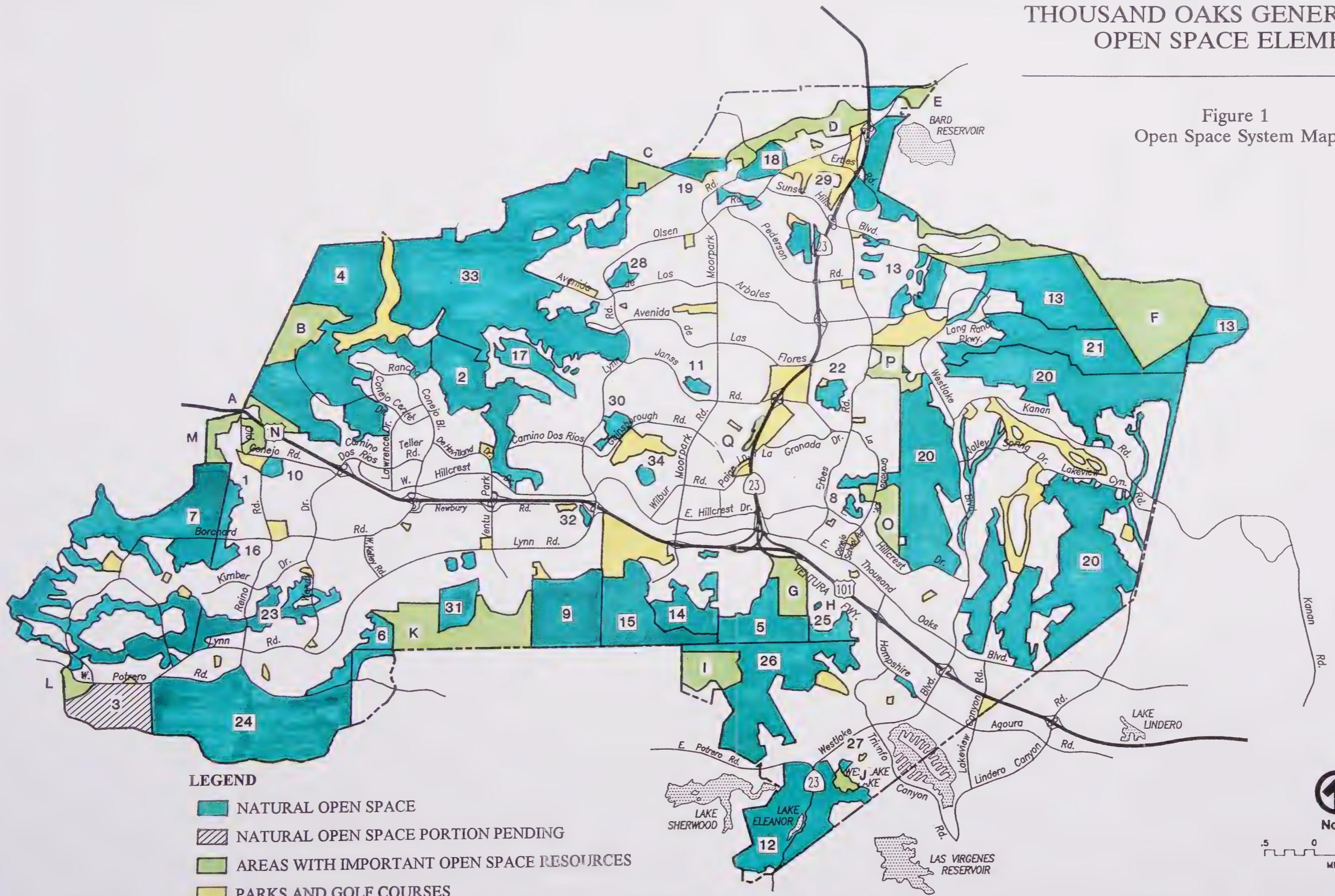
In considering the "ring" concept, planning should extend beyond the City's planning boundary to provide a buffer zone with adjacent communities and encourage compatible land use with other jurisdictions.

The Open Space Element is designed to augment the Open Space System incorporated in the Land Use Element of the General Plan by analyzing the functions of open space, further delineating desirable open space areas and, together with the Conservation Element, setting forth a comprehensive and realistic implementation program to preserve sensitive biological habitats and the spacious quality of the Conejo Valley. The Recreation Element of this General Plan, prepared in cooperation with the Conejo Recreation and Park District, outlines specific goals, policies and proposals for active recreation facilities within the Conejo Valley. The Recreation Element augments the Open Space Element in guiding the effectuation of the Open Space System.

The Open Space System is depicted on Figure 1, the Open Space System Map.

THOUSAND OAKS GENERAL PLAN OPEN SPACE ELEMENT

Figure 1
Open Space System Map



LEGEND

- NATURAL OPEN SPACE
- NATURAL OPEN SPACE PORTION PENDING
- AREAS WITH IMPORTANT OPEN SPACE RESOURCES
- PARKS AND GOLF COURSES



North

.5 0 .5 1.0
MILES

B. Open Space Inventory

Thousand Oaks' permanent open space has grown steadily since the General Plan was adopted in 1970. Land classified as natural open space within the Planning Area in 1996 totals about 13,100 acres, or about 34% of the land within the Planning Area. As other lands anticipated to be added to the system come on line, natural open space acreage is expected to increase to about 14,400 acres, or about 37% of the Planning Area. Other active elements of the open space system - parks and golf courses - will account for another approximately 1,500 acres, bringing the total for the open space system as a whole to about 15,900 acres, or 41% of the Planning Area's total acreage.

This sub-chapter inventories the existing natural open space, including lands which have been or are required to be set aside for this purpose, both in public ownership and in private ownership. For purpose of identification and description, open space parcels within close proximity to each other have been grouped into open space "areas." The descriptions below summarize open space resources, natural features, size, ownership, location, trails and access points. Table 1 summarizes and tabulates open space acreage for these areas, and Figure 2, the Open Space Inventory, shows their location within the Planning Area.

1 Alta Vista

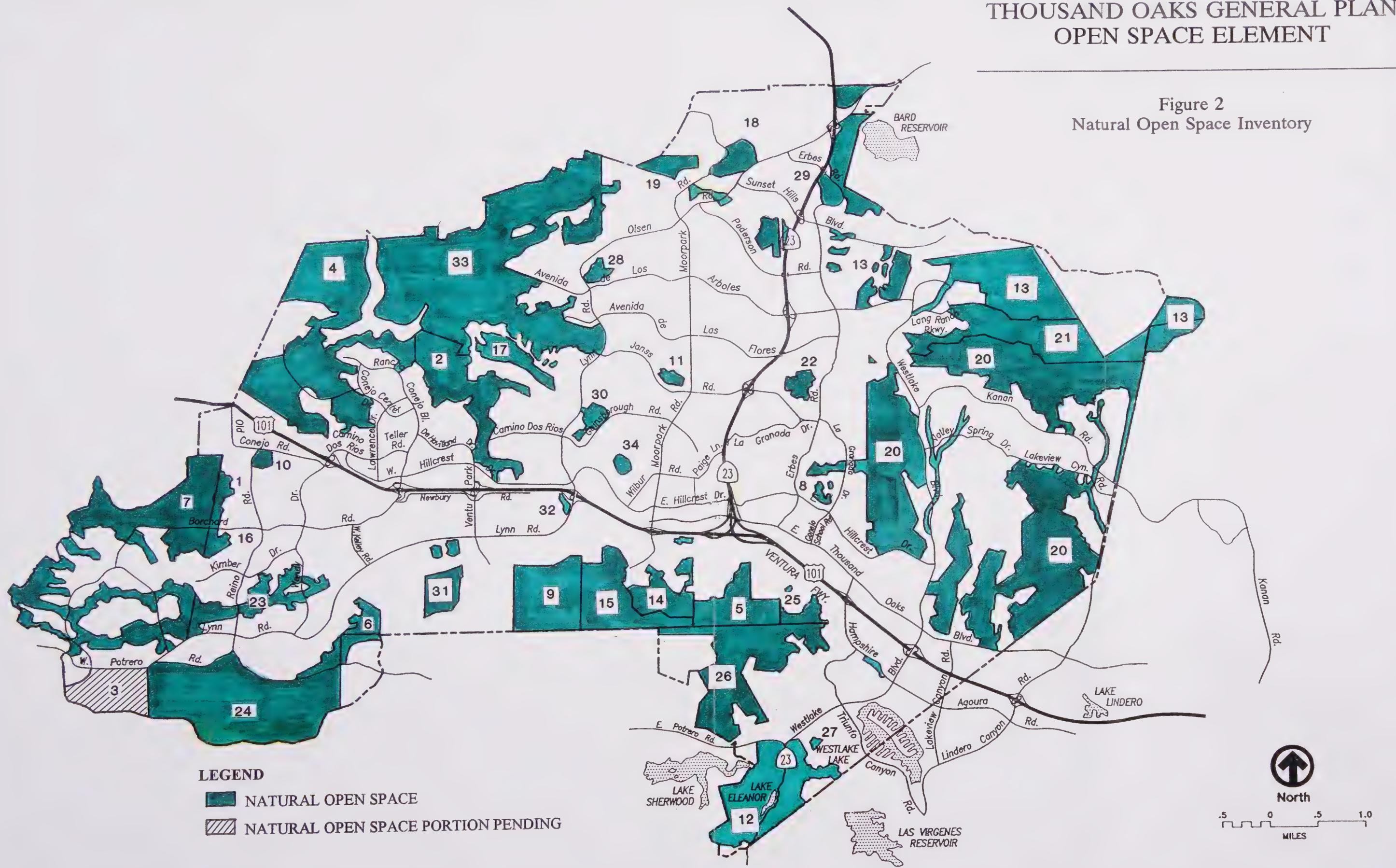
The Alta Vista Open Space is located adjacent to the Dos Vientos Open Space in Newbury Park. Most of this 43-acre area is owned by a homeowners association, although about 11 acres, located on the south side of Calle Alta Vista, is owned by the Conejo Open Space Conservation Agency (COSCA). The predominant habitat on-site is coastal sage scrub.

2 Arroyo Conejo Nature Preserve

The 262-acre Arroyo Conejo Nature Preserve is located northeast of the intersection of Hillcrest Drive and Ventu Park Road. This preserve, which is often referred to as the "barranca", was highlighted in the Conservation Element of the General Plan (1972) and identified in the City's Conejo Canyons Study (1976) as an area with particularly important and sensitive resources. Resources include steep-sided canyons, oak woodlands, a perennial stream, and riparian vegetation which provide ideal habitat for nesting, foraging and wildlife movements. The preserve is owned by COSCA and the City, with some limited access to protect the area's resources. A trailhead for this area is planned on the east side of Ventu Park Road just north of Hillcrest Drive.

THOUSAND OAKS GENERAL PLAN OPEN SPACE ELEMENT

Figure 2
Natural Open Space Inventory



3 Broome Ranch

In 1993, the City, Conejo Recreation and Park District (Park District) and the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority cooperated to acquire a 326-acre portion of the Broome Ranch, located south of Potrero Road in the southwest corner of the Conejo Valley. This area, which is bordered on the east by the National Park Service's Rancho Sierra Vista/Satwiwa Native American Indian Culture Center, includes grasslands, coastal sage scrub with the Conejo rock plant association, and riparian habitats. While specific land uses have not yet been defined for this property, it is likely that a significant amount of the site will be designated as natural open space, including steep slopes on the south side of the property that form part of the Sycamore Canyon drainage system. Trails in this area will connect to the Dos Vientos Open Space and the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area. A portion of this area is being used as an interim location for the Two Winds Equestrian Center.

4 Conejo Canyons

The Conejo Canyons Open Space is a system of deeply eroded canyons, plateaus and ridgelines in the northwest portion of the Conejo Valley. This area, which totals 1,119 acres, includes the northern Arroyo Conejo, Western Canyon, the Seventh Day Adventist property, and the Calleguas Ridgeline. On clear days, trails in this area afford dramatic views of Ventura and the coastline, as well as inland to the Topa Topa mountains north of Ojai. This area also conserves a variety of habitats, including coast live oak woodlands, riparian habitats, interior sage scrub/chaparral, and coastal sage scrub. Most of this area is owned by the City, although a little more than 300 acres are in private ownership subject to a Specific Plan condition requiring an offer of dedication to the City. The natural open space surrounds a 154-acre golf course reserve as designated by Specific Plan No. 7. Specific boundaries between the golf course reserve and natural open space have not been determined.

- 5 Conejo Ridge** This 224-acre parcel featuring a secluded valley, with hillside and mountainous terrain as well, is owned by the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority and forms an important part of the open space ring on the southern edge of the Conejo Valley. Located south of the Ventura (101) and Thousand Oaks (23) Freeway interchange, this area includes relatively undisturbed chaparral, oak woodlands and coastal sage scrub, and provides important habitat for deer, mountain lions, bobcats and other wildlife. The only trail in this area links the southerly terminus of Rimrock Road with the Los Robles Trail, but other trails are planned. This area is adjacent to several other open space units.
- 6 Deer Ridge** Located in the southwest portion of the City, the Deer Ridge Open Space is owned by COSCA and is dominated by a series of north-facing ridges and canyons that support chaparral with scattered oaks. This 160-acre area shares a common border with the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area, and is a prominent visual feature in the Newbury Park area. The Los Robles Trail traverses the length of the Deer Ridge Open Space, with access points at the southern end of Felton Street, and at a trailhead on Potrero Road.
- 7 Dos Vientos** This large open space area (1,202 acres) is located in the southwest corner of the Conejo Valley and is required to be dedicated as public open space per Specific Plan conditions and a development agreement for the Dos Vientos Ranch. Dominated by chaparral and coastal sage scrub habitats, this area provides habitat for a wide variety of wildlife as well as rare and endangered plants. A trail system over 6 miles long provides internal and regional trail connections, as well as views of the Pacific Ocean and the Channel Islands. The principal trail access points for this area are park sites planned for the Dos Vientos Ranch. To the south of the Dos Vientos Open Space is the Broome Ranch, Rancho Sierra Vista/Satwiwa and Point Mugu State Park, encompassing over 16,000 acres of open space. Contiguous open space areas to the east include the Alta Vista Open Space, Potrero Open Space, and Los Vientos Open Space.

- 8 Glider Hill** This area consists of 43 acres of private open space that encircle two prominent knolls. A system of public trails connect equestrians and other residents in the Hauser Circle/Rancho Road area to the North Ranch Open Space through this open space. The dominant vegetation in this area is non-native grassland.
- 9 Hope Nature Preserve** This 348-acre parcel was a gift from the actor and comedian Bob Hope to the Park District. Located on the south side of the valley, this open space contains extensive stands of chaparral and oak woodland that provide ideal habitat for deer, coyotes, mountain lions, bobcats, gray fox, rabbits, and many other animals. In the springtime many wildflowers can be seen along the trails in this area. The Los Robles Trail provides the principal access through this open space, including connections to Lynn Oaks Park.
- 10 Knoll** The 21-acre Knoll Open Space is located next to Pepper Tree Playfield in Newbury Park. This area, which is owned by COSCA, is covered in a mosaic of non-native grasslands and coastal sage scrub. A gently sloping trail leads to the top of the hill, which offers views of Newbury Park and the surrounding area.
- 11 Labisco Hill** The Labisco Hill Open Space is located in the heart of Thousand Oaks, near the northwest corner of Janss Road and Moorpark Road. Although relatively small (25 acres), this grassland-covered knoll provides a visual contrast to the urban landscape and creates a sense of spaciousness in the area.
- 12 Lake Eleanor** The Lake Eleanor Open Space is named for an eight-acre freshwater lake located near the center of this 517-acre area. Acquired by COSCA in 1986, this area includes diverse wildlife habitat and scenic resources, rugged hills, prominent rocky outcrops, freshwater marsh habitat, oak woodland and coastal sage scrub. The rocky outcrops are often used by hawks and other large birds as nesting sites, and the area supports several species of rare and endangered plants. Due to the rugged terrain and sensitive resources, trails have not been developed in this area.

13 Lang Ranch

The Lang Ranch Open Space is located in the northeast portion of the City and is composed of several open space units totalling 528 acres. The largest of these areas is a picturesque 408-acre parcel that includes rolling grasslands, oak woodlands, and riparian corridors, which is planned for future transfer from the City to the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority. The principal access to this area will be provided from the planned Oakbrook Community Park on Lang Ranch Parkway. The Lang Ranch trail system will provide connections to other public lands, including China Flats, Cheeseboro Canyon, Palo Comado Canyon, Sunset Hills Open Space, and the North Ranch Open Space. In addition to this major open space holding, an additional 120 acres of arroyos and grassy slopes are protected within and near the Lang Ranch to conserve scenic resources, wildlife movement corridors and oak woodlands. All of these open space areas are owned by the City.

14 Los Padres

This open space preserve is located near the southern end of Moorpark Road, and encompasses 185 acres of chaparral-covered hillsides and oak woodlands. This area includes one of the most beautiful stands of coast live oaks in the City, and can be easily accessed from a trailhead on Los Padres Drive. This trail also provides a direct link to the Los Robles Trail near the ridgeline. This area is frequented by deer, rabbits, California quail, California thrasher and many other animals. In the spring and fall, the oak woodlands are an excellent place to observe migrating birds such as warblers and vireos. Most of this open space area is owned by COSCA.

15 Los Robles

The Los Robles Open Space contains approximately 355 acres of land located on the southerly edge of the Conejo Valley. It includes a nearly mile-long stretch of the prominent ridgeline flanking the Valley, along with dense chaparral-covered slopes and some relatively flat, grassy potreros near the ridgeline where one can often see deer browsing in the early morning and late afternoon. There are several miles of trails within this open space area, and the ridgeline trails provide some of the most scenic vistas in the Valley, with panoramic views of Thousand Oaks. The principal trailhead is at the southern terminus of Moorpark Road, but secondary access is provided from trailheads at the Arts Council Center and on Los Padres Drive. The City owns this open space area, along with the adjacent Los Robles Golf Course.

16 Los Vientos

This open space area is located at the southern terminus of Los Vientos Drive in Newbury Park. Covering 28 acres, this area includes non-native grassland and coastal sage scrub habitat. The area is contiguous to the Dos Vientos Open Space, and provides direct access to the regional trail system. The Los Vientos Open Space is owned by COSCA.

17 Lynnmere

The Lynnmere Open Space protects 130 acres of coastal sage scrub-covered slopes and ridgelines. This area, which is connected to Wildwood Park with two wildlife corridors, is frequented by deer and other wildlife that move freely between these open space areas. Trails in this area provide views of Wildwood Park, Mount Clef Ridge, and the Conejo Canyons Open Space. This area is owned by COSCA.

**18 McCrea
Wildlife
Refuge**

This 75-acre preserve was a gift to COSCA from the actor Joel McCrea and his family in 1981. This area includes rocky outcrops that are favorite roosting and nesting sites for birds of prey, as well as a deep canyon that provides a year-round water source for local wildlife and riparian vegetation. The area also supports several species of rare and endangered plants and the locally unique Conejo rock plant association. Under terms of an agreement with the McCrea family, public access to this preserve is limited to protect sensitive resources.

- 19 Mount Clef Ridge** The Mt. Clef Ridge Open Space totals 80 acres, and extends from the Norwegian Grade (Moorpark Road) west to Wildwood Park. This area protects ridgelines that afford sweeping views of both the Conejo Valley and the Santa Rosa Valley. Plant communities include coastal sage scrub and chaparral. Two sensitive plants- the Lyon's Pentachaeta and Conejo Dudleya- are found in this area, and the area also supports many wildlife species such as deer, coyote, and gray fox. A trail is planned that would eventually connect this area to trails in Wildwood Park. Open space in this area is currently in private ownership but will be publicly owned.
- 20 North Ranch** The North Ranch Open Space includes an extensive system of protected areas that conserve diverse habitats, plants, and animals. This area, which totals 2,506 acres, is primarily owned by COSCA, with a few smaller areas in private ownership. Among the most outstanding resources in this area are the sandstone cliffs of the Simi Hills, spacious mosaics of coastal sage scrub and grassland, pockets of Southern California black walnut groves, and coast live oak woodlands along the area's creeks. Wildlife is abundant, and includes most mammals and birds likely to be seen in the Conejo Valley. A number of sensitive plants also occur in these areas. Access to the North Ranch Open Space is provided at the North Ranch Playfield, and through trail access points on Westlake Boulevard, Pathfinder Avenue, Falling Star Avenue, and Collingswood Court. Regionally, the North Ranch Open Space trail system is designed to connect with trails in Oak Park, Lang Ranch and to the Los Robles Trail south of the Ventura (101) Freeway.
- 21 Oakbrook Regional Park** This 430-acre park is owned by the County of Ventura, and features a Chumash Interpretive Center. The park is located adjacent to the Lang Ranch Open Space in the northeast corner of the City, and was established to protect cultural resources, chaparral habitat and an outstanding coast live oak woodland along Lang Creek. Public access to this park is restricted to the Interpretive Center on Lang Ranch Parkway. Most of the park consists of steep, north-facing slopes with very dense chaparral and occasional sandstone outcrops.

- 22 Old Meadows** This 50-acre open space area is owned by the City and is located adjacent to Old Meadows Park just east of Conejo Creek Park. This area supports non-native grassland, coastal sage scrub and scattered coast live oaks, and includes a knoll with views of the Conejo Valley. Access is provided from either Church Road/El Monte Drive (equestrians), or from Shadow Oaks Place (hikers and bicyclists) and Marview Road. A 20-acre portion of this area adjacent to Old Meadows Park is being held by the City for future transfer to the Conejo Recreation and Park District.
- 23 Potrero** The Potrero Open Space encompasses a low-lying ridge that runs east-west in Newbury Park. This area, which totals 187 acres, includes grassy hillsides, coastal sage scrub, and oak woodlands, and is accessed from a trailhead on Wendy Drive. A trailhead planned for the Potrero Open Space at Reino Road will provide additional access to this area and to the Dos Vientos Open Space to the west. Most of this area is owned by COSCA.
- 24 Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area** Established in 1978, the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area (NRA) includes approximately 20,000 acres of publicly owned land in the Santa Monica Mountains. About 964 acres of this total is within the Thousand Oaks Planning Area, located at the southern edge of Newbury Park. Within this area is Rancho Sierra Vista and the Satwiwa Native American Indian Culture Center. Trails from Rancho Sierra Vista connect to the Pacific Ocean, through Point Mugu State Park. In 1993, the National Park Service acquired a 315-acre portion of the Broome Ranch, of which 109 acres is within the City's Planning Area and included in the total acreage above. A new entrance to the NRA is planned from Lynn Road. In 1996, access to these areas is from a trailhead at West Potrero Road and Pinehill Road. The NRA is managed by the National Park Service.

25 Skyline

This area is located south of Skyline Drive, and includes a series of small north-facing ridges and valleys. This 53-acre preserve is covered in dense chaparral, with occasional stands of coast live oaks. Most of this open space area is owned by COSCA, some of which was acquired by gift and some of which was purchased at a tax foreclosure sale. It is likely that more parcels will be added in the future. The best access to this area is from Foothill Drive.

26 South Ranch

The Westlake South Ranch Open Space was donated to COSCA in 1986 by the Prudential Insurance Company, and includes 609 acres. This area protects a significant portion of the ridgeline south of the Ventura (101) Freeway, extending toward Lake Eleanor. A variety of habitats occur in this area, including chaparral, coastal sage scrub, and coast live oak woodlands, as well as a significant portion of the Los Robles Trail. Principal access points include Triunfo Community Park, and East Potrero Road at Vista Oaks. Deer, bobcat, and rabbits are commonly seen in this area.

27 Southshore Hills

This 13-acre area is located between Southshore Hills Park and the Lake Eleanor Open Space in Westlake Village. This area serves principally as wildlife habitat and to protect visual resources, with no trails planned. This preserve is owned by COSCA and supports coastal sage scrub and chaparral.

28 Summit House

The 32-acre Summit House Open Space is located near the northeast corner of Avenida de los Arboles and Lynn Road, and includes non-native grassland and coastal sage scrub. The Summit House Open Space is owned by COSCA.

29 Sunset Hills

This area includes 393 acres of open space preserves distributed throughout the Sunset Hills community in northern Thousand Oaks. The largest of these preserves is a key component of the "ring" of open space, located on Erbes Road, east of the Thousand Oaks (23) Freeway and south of Olsen Road. This 238 acre area protects oak woodlands, coastal sage scrub, non-native grasslands and coastal sage scrub. It also contains areas of unstable soils, steeply sloping land and a prominent ridgeline. Several trails in this area provide views of Bard Reservoir, and on clear days one can see the Pacific Ocean. This area supports many species of wildlife, including birds of prey such as black-shouldered kites, northern harriers and red-tailed hawks. Spring blooms of bladderpod attract many Anna's hummingbirds to this area. Access is provided from a trailhead on Erbes Road. The City owns the majority of the Sunset Hills Open Space.

30 Tarantula Hill

This area, named for the spiders which frequent its grassy slopes, is located in the heart of Thousand Oaks near the Conejo Valley Botanic Gardens. Rising sharply from the valley floor, this 47-acre area provides panoramic views of Thousand Oaks. Parking is available on Gainsborough Road, with a paved road providing access to the top of the hill. Tarantula Hill is owned by COSCA.

31 Ventu Park

This 139-acre open space area is located in the community of Ventu Park. Covered in dense chaparral with occasional coast live oaks, this area provides important wildlife habitat and protects scenic, north-facing slopes and a portion of the southern ridgeline. A trail in this area will provide access to the Los Robles Trail from Lynn Road. This area is in private ownership, but is dedicated as public open space.

32 Walnut

This small, 9-acre area is located next to Walnut Park, near the intersection of Lynn Road and the Ventura (101) Freeway. As such it is a critical scenic resource at an important gateway to the community. The area includes coastal sage scrub and a few coast live oaks. A trail from Walnut Park provides access to this area. COSCA owns the Walnut Open Space.

33 Wildwood Park

Wildwood Park comprises the largest contiguous open space unit in Thousand Oaks. Covering 1,754 acres and located adjacent to almost 1,000 more acres of open space, Wildwood Park protects many important wildlife habitats as well as provides many opportunities for passive recreation. Trails provide access to most parts of Wildwood Park, and several picnic areas are located near Wildwood Creek. Almost all of the plant communities found in Thousand Oaks can be located in Wildwood Park, and the park supports several species of rare and endangered plants. Wildlife includes deer, bobcat, raccoon, coyote, opossum, gray fox, and mountain lion. Access is provided at the western terminus of Avenida de los Arboles, and at several neighborhood access points. A trail map and brochure is available from COSCA describing the history and resources of Wildwood Park. Most of Wildwood Park is owned by the Park District, with lesser amounts owned by COSCA and the City.

34 Fireworks Hill

The City Council has authorized preparation of a Specific Plan for the former Civic Center site at 401 West Hillcrest Drive, and the adjacent "Fireworks Hill," comprising a total of 62 acres of land. The draft Specific Plan designates approximately 31 acres as open space.

TABLE 1 - Thousand Oaks Planning Area Open Space Inventory (1996)

NO.	OPEN SPACE AREA	SUBAREAS	ACRES BY OWNERSHIP					TOTAL ACRES
			COSCA	CITY	CRPD	OTHER PUBLIC	PRIVATE	
1	Alta Vista Open Space	-	11				32	43
2	Arroyo Conejo	Nature Preserve	74	188				316
		South Arroyo Conejo	52				2	
3	Broome Ranch	-	Pending					Pending
4	Conejo Canyons	Rancho Conejo		802				1,119
		Adventist Hill	4				313	
5	Conejo Ridge Open Space	-				224		224
6	Deer Ridge Open Space	Deer Ridge	116	3				160
		White Stallion					41	
7	Dos Vientos Open Space	-					1,202	1,202
8	Glider Hill Open Space	-					43	43
9	Hope Nature Preserve	-			348			348
10	Knoll Open Space	-	21					21
11	Labisco Hill Open Space	-	25					25
12	Lake Eleanor Open Space	-	517					517
13	Lang Ranch Open Space	Lang Creek		11				771
		Lang Ranch West		106				
		Lang Ranch East		408			5	
		Montgomery Ranch					106	
		Jordan Ranch				135		

TABLE 1 - Thousand Oaks Planning Area Open Space Inventory (1996)

NO.	OPEN SPACE AREA	SUBAREAS	ACRES BY OWNERSHIP					TOTAL ACRES
			COSCA	CITY	CRPD	OTHER PUBLIC	PRIVATE	
14	Los Padres Open Space	-	160	7			19	186
15	Los Robles Open Space	-		355				355
16	Los Vientos Open Space	-	28					28
17	Lynnmere Open Space	-	107				23	130
18	McCrea Wildlife Refuge	-	75					75
19	Mt. Clef Ridge Open Space	-		5			75	80
20	North Ranch Open Space	Lakeview Canyon	148				66	2,506
		Lindero Creek	4				37	
		North Ranch Arroyos					34	
		Hillcrest	678	16				
		Simi Hills	407	243				
		North Ranch East	832				41	
21	Oakbrook Regional Park	-				427	3	430
22	Old Meadows Open Space	-		50				50
23	Potrero Open Space	Potrero	180				4	187
		Kelley Estates		3				
24	Santa Monica Mountains NRA	-				964		964
25	Skyline Open Space	-	42	5			6	53
26	South Ranch Open Space	-	609				38	647
27	Southshore Hills Open Space	-	13					13

TABLE 1 - Thousand Oaks Planning Area Open Space Inventory (1996)

NO.	OPEN SPACE AREA	SUBAREAS	ACRES BY OWNERSHIP					TOTAL ACRES
			COSCA	CITY	CRPD	OTHER PUBLIC	PRIVATE	
28	Summit House Open Space	-	32					32
29	Sunset Hills Open Space	Amber Ridge	40	206				389
		Northwood	54				9	
		Olsen Road	27			49	4	
30	Tarantula Hill Open Space	-	47					47
31	Ventu Park Open Space	-		20			119	139
32	Walnut Open Space	-	9					9
33	Wildwood	Wildwood Mesa	237					1,754
		Wildwood Park			1,132			
		Lynnmore North		385				
34	Fireworks Hill	-		31				31
TOTAL OPEN SPACE			4,549	2,844	1,480	1,799	2,222	12,894

Table Notes

- "Other Public" is land owned by other public agencies including the County of Ventura, National Park Service, and the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority.
- Some land in the "private" category will be transferred to a public agency in the future; specifically Dos Vientos, Adventist Hill, and Ventu Park Open Space.

C. Areas With Important Open Space Resources

The preceding sub-chapter has inventoried natural open space which is presently owned by public agencies or is privately-owned but subject to City-imposed restrictions.

This sub-chapter identifies areas with important open space resources, which should be considered as priorities for future additions to the open space system in line with the policies of this Element. The areas identified and described in this subchapter comprise the most significant future open space resources only. From time to time, other areas with important open space resources may be identified and the City may determine to preserve such areas. This discussion is not intended to limit the City's efforts in open space acquisition to only those areas described below.

As Figures 1 and 2 show, most of the ring of open space within the City's Planning Area has been set aside as open space. Supporting elements of the ring, such as Greenbelt Agreement areas, open space within adjacent jurisdictions, and undeveloped land with significant development constraints, are also in place as shown on Figure 1.

Completion of the ring of open space should be the first priority for future open space preservation efforts. Specific areas of focus are shown on Figure 3, and are briefly described in this section, which is organized by quadrant of the Planning Area. Table 2, following the descriptions, provides an overview of the areas, including the resources present in at least some portions of the parcels areas.

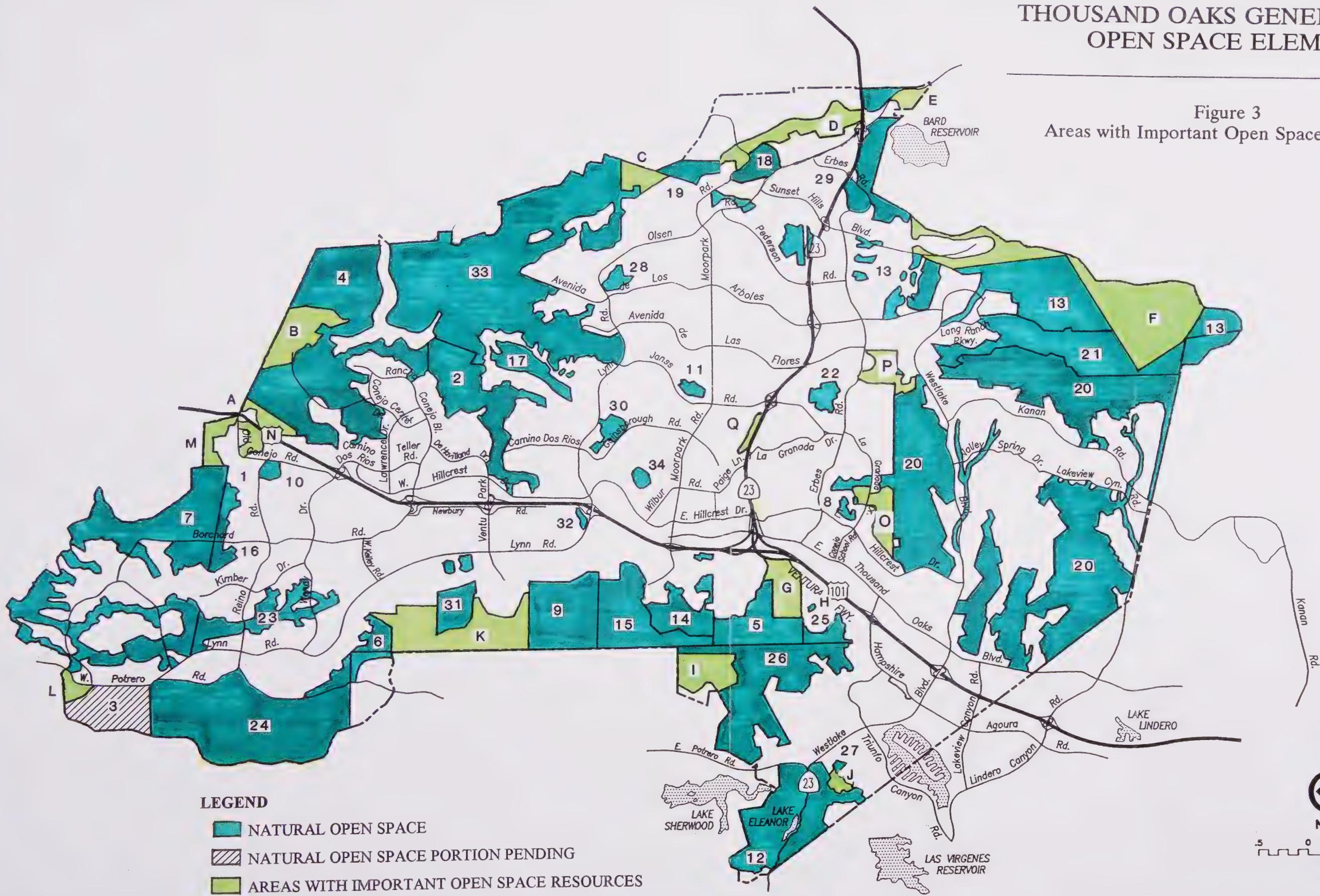
The discussion of each area notes the degree to which land with resource or open space value within the area is likely to be set aside through the normal development review process, based upon the General Plan designation and zoning of the property in 1996, and the application of adopted General Plan policies.

1. Northwestern Quadrant (Ventura Freeway to Thousand Oaks Freeway)

The ring of open space in this quadrant is fairly well-defined for the most part, including the Conejo Canyons Open Space, Wildwood Park, the McCrea Wildlife Refuge and a portion of the Sunset Hills Open Space. Consideration of future additions to the ring should focus on the following locations:

THOUSAND OAKS GENERAL PLAN OPEN SPACE ELEMENT

Figure 3
Areas with Important Open Space Resources



- A Adventist Hill** This area consists of approximately 42 acres of steep slopes and ridgelines located within the upper portions of undeveloped lots fronting on Grande Vista Drive. It includes significant open space areas that would be protected due to topography. Adequate land use controls exist to conserve this open space.
- B Western Plateau** Area known as "Western Plateau" within Specific Plan No. 7 (Rancho Conejo). This land consists of a plateau incised by small drainages, and is bordered on three sides by the Conejo Canyons Open Space which includes both lower and higher terrain. The "Western Plateau" itself does not contain any ridgeline and very limited steeply sloping area, but would be a beneficial addition to the open space ring in this area because it would substantially expand the width of the ring and improve continuity for wildlife migration.
- The land is designated for very low density residential (147 homes) by Specific Plan No. 7, and is covered by a development agreement between the City and the property owner, subject to compliance with Specific Plan conditions. There are no plans to develop it pending in 1996, and there are significant development constraints related to the cost of providing primary and secondary access, utilities, and site development itself.
- C Mountclef Ridge** This area consists of steep slopes and ridgelines located north of California Lutheran University between Wildwood Park and Moorpark Road. Portions of this area are owned by the University itself, while other portions are in smaller parcels that were subdivided before the City incorporated. The City recently acquired 4.5 acres of open space here, and is considering appropriate zoning for other parcels in this area. However, any development of the sites on this ridge may alter the appearance of the "ring" of open space in this quadrant of the Valley.
- D Sunset North** Steeply sloping terrain and upper ridgelines located between Moorpark Road and the Thousand Oaks Freeway. The Conejo Recreation and Park District has received the McCrea property, some of which will be set aside as natural open space. Further to the east, steep slopes and ridgeline terrain on the 110-acre Cornell property should be preserved as open space. This latter property is within an agricultural preserve and subject to a Land Conservation Act contract.

2. Northeastern Quadrant (Thousand Oaks Freeway to Ventura Freeway)

The ring of open space is very well-defined in this quadrant, including portions of the Sunset Hills Open Space, Lang Ranch Open Space, and North Ranch Open Space. Remaining undeveloped land not already set aside as open space is for the most part subject to approved development entitlements in the Lang Ranch area.

- E Sunset Northeast** This 57-acre site is located on hillside and ridgeline terrain adjacent to Olsen Road and the Calleguas Municipal Water District facility. Development under the existing RPD-0.22-SFD zoning can be expected to substantially preserve open space resources.
- F Wood Ranch** One area of focus within this quadrant should be a portion of the Wood Ranch. Most of the area known as the Wood Ranch is in the City of Simi Valley. However, there is an approximately 750-acre section of the ranch which is within the Thousand Oaks Planning Area, and is being planned for development. This site includes both land which is developable under the General Plan and land which should be set aside as natural open space, including ridgeline areas, steep slopes, and wildlife habitat and migration areas.
- Specific open space areas will be determined as part of the zoning and development review process, but are estimated to comprise approximately 600 acres.

This land is of specific interest related to the provision of an open space buffer between development within the Wood Ranch area of Simi Valley and the Lang Ranch area of Thousand Oaks.

3. Southeastern Quadrant (Ventura Freeway to Los Robles/Hope Open Space Areas)

The ring of open space in this quadrant is well-established, and is principally defined by the large tracts of open space donated to COSCA by Prudential Insurance Company in the mid 1980's, the Conejo Ridge (Linfen) Open Space, and the Los Robles and Hope Open Space areas to the west. The ring is continuous from Triunfo Park to the Hope Open Space.

Future additions to the ring will come principally from land required to be set aside in conjunction with future development on two major parcels, and from future acquisitions which may be pursued in the Skyline area.

- G Conejo Ridge** This area is located just south of the 101/23 Freeway interchange and is a prominent and important natural ridgeline area. Most of this area's open space resources would be protected under the area's HPD zoning. Additional measures, however, may be necessary if complete protection is considered appropriate due to visual and other considerations.
- H Skyline Area Addition** This area is located adjacent to the South Ranch and Conejo Ridge Open Space Areas, and comprises an antiquated subdivision with numerous small lots primarily zoned RE-13 (Rural Exclusive, 13,000 square foot minimum lot size). Under this zoning, a theoretical maximum of approximately 218 dwelling units could be built. A land use study of this area was completed in 1994. Alternatives for open space preservation being studied include re-zoning of certain parcels, acquisition of key parcels, use of transfer of development rights, and parcel mergers.
- I Westlake South Ranch** This 193-acre area was recently re-zoned HPD-SFD-PR by the City Council, which will preserve most of the site as natural open space, augmenting the Westlake South Ranch Open Space portion of the ring. Still, the area is surrounded on the north and south by open space areas, and may merit additional measures to protect open space.
- J Southshore Hills** This is a remnant 19 acre site zoned RPD-0.1U-SFD adjacent to the Lake Eleanor Open Space. Existing zoning should be adequate for significant open space protection.

4. Southwestern Quadrant (Los Robles/Hope Open Space to Dos Vientos to Ventura Freeway)

The ring in this quadrant is somewhat fragmented due to the existence of previously subdivided areas in the Ventu Park and Kelley Estates areas, significant portions of which are in the unincorporated areas.

In the extreme southwesterly and westerly portions of the Planning Area, the ring is defined by the Rancho Sierra Vista, Broome Ranch, and Dos Vientos Open Space areas. It is buttressed in a regional sense by land outside the Planning area which are or will be preserved as open space such as the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area, Point Mugu State Park, and steep lands to the west of Dos Vientos.

Future additions to the ring should focus on the missing links in the Kelley Estates and Ventu Park areas. Since these areas have been previously subdivided, it is not practical to expect large

dedications of contiguous open space lands in conjunction with future development. Although these lands have significant development constraints, in some areas acquisition by purchase may be the only viable way to augment the ring.

- K Southern Ridge** This area is within unincorporated area and is zoned OS-20 (Open Space, 20 acre minimum lot size). Some of the resources in this area will be protected under the provisions of the Thousand Oaks Area Plan, but further measures may be necessary to ensure complete protection of this area.
- L Broome Ranch Addition** This area includes portions of two parcels at the southwestern periphery of the Planning Area along the south side of Potrero Road adjacent to the Broome Ranch. These reinforce the wildlife movement corridor in this area with some terrain which is relatively easy to traverse and have exceptional scenic qualities. One parcel is designated for development of an equestrian center (Planning Unit 4 in Specific Plan 9), while the other is an approximately 20-acre portion of a very large parcel, the balance of which is outside the City's Planning Area. This site is designated for "very low density residential" development by the Land Use Element.
- M Vallecito** The area consists of steeper slopes and a ridgeline above and to the south and west of the Vallecito Mobile Home Park. It is an important link in the ring of open space in this area, and abuts the Dos Vientos Open Space area to the south.
- N Old Conejo Peak** Development plans for this area were submitted in the past and included significant open space areas due to the site's topography. No additional action beyond normal development review should be pursued at this time for this area.

5. Internal Open Space

Although most of the interior of the Planning Area is developed, there are some existing open space resources as described above in the Open Space Inventory, and there are some other sites which should be considered for future open space protection.

- O Glider Hill Addition** Much of the open space resources in this area adjacent to the North Ranch Open Space will be preserved as public open space through the area's HPD zoning.

- P Erbes Road** The majority of this area is zoned RPD-0.2U (Residential Planned Development, 0.2 dwelling units per acre), with HPD zoned for the remainder. Most of the open space in this area will be preserved through the development process.
- Q Freeway Corridor** This approximately 8-acre strip along the west side of the Thousand Oaks (Route 23) Freeway is part of the Freeway right-of-way and is owned by CalTrans. The Conejo Recreation and Park District leases this area for trail purposes. It contains southern oak woodland, riparian, and wetland habitat, and is also a scenic open space amenity for travelers, obscuring the view of a concrete-lined flood control channel.

TABLE 2 - Areas With Important Open Space Resources

AREA	Size in Acres (approx)	No. of Parcels (approx)	Resources Present in Area									
			Land	Geo	Arch	Strm	Veg	R/E	HR/E	WMC	SD	WH
A. Adventist Hill	42	6					o		X		Mod	Mod
B. Western Plateau	184	1			X	X	a,b,c,d,e,i		X		High	High
C. Mountclef Ridge	70	5	X				b,c,d,e		X		X	High
D. Sunset North	100	3	X	X			a,c,d,e			X	Mod	Mod
E. Sunset Northeast	52	2	X	X			a,c,d,e		X	X	Mod	Mod
F. Wood Ranch	600	1	X	X	X	X	a,c,d,e,g,i		X	X	High	High
G. Conejo Ridge	200	5	X				c,e,f,i		X		Mod	Mod
H. Skyline Addition	75	136	X		X		a,c,e,f		X	X	Mod	Mod
I. Westlake South	193	1	X		X	X	a,b,c,e,f,i		X	X	High	Mod
J. Southshore Hills	19	1				X	e,f		X	X	Low	Low
K. Southern Ridge	390	360	X		X	X	a,b,c,e,f,i		X		High	High
L. Broome Addition	30	2	X				a,c,d			X	Low	Mod
M. Vallecito	40	4	X			X	a,o,e		X		Low	Mod
N. Old Conejo Peak	50	1	X				o,d				Low	Low
O. Glider Addition	100	9	X	X		X	a,c				Low	Low
P. Erbes Road	100	2	X	X		X	a,c,i				Low	Low
Q. Freeway Corridor	8	1				X	a,f,h,i,j				Mod	Mod

Resource Legend				Vegetation Types				
Land	Prominent ridgeline or landform feature	HR/E	Habitat suitable for rare/endangered species	a	Non-native California grassland	f	Southern oak woodland	
Geo	Geologic formation with fossils	WMC	Important wildlife movement corridor	b	Native grassland	g	Oak savannah	
Arch	Historic/archaeologically significant area	SD	Species Diversity	c	Coastal sage scrub	h	Riparian woodland	
Strm	Blue-line stream channel(s) on-site	WH	Wildlife Habitat Value	d	Xeric cactus shrub	i	Riparian scrub	
R/E	Rare or endangered species present			e	Chaparral	j	Wetland	

CHAPTER 5

ACTION PLAN TO IMPLEMENT THE OPEN SPACE ELEMENT

This Chapter is a statement of the City's plan to carry out the policies established in Chapter 3 and complete the open space system described in Chapter 4. Methods to finance acquisition of open space areas, where necessary, and for maintenance of the system are discussed in Chapter 6.

A. Open Space Zoning Ordinance

The City's Open Space Zoning Ordinance comprises several components, which are described below. These components have all been adopted by the City Council and are contained in the Thousand Oaks Municipal Code (TOMC).

Open Space Zone (TOMC Section 9-4.3600 et. seq.)	The City's Open Space Zone was established in compliance with California Government Code Sections 65560-70 (Open Space Lands), and Sections 65910-11 (Open-Space Zoning). The regulations of this zone are intended to be applied to those lands which are set aside as natural open space, whether in public or private ownership, ensuring that any uses or structures proposed on such land will have "minimal impact on the natural, undisturbed character of the land." As noted earlier in this Element, approximately 7,200 acres of land within the City have been zoned OS (Open Space), and are specifically subject to its regulations.
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**Disposition
or Lease of
Property
Held by the
City for
Open Space
Purposes
(TOMC
Section 9-
13.101 et.
seq.)**

The general policy of the City is that open space shall be retained as such in perpetuity. From time to time, it may be beneficial to consider sale, exchange, other transfer, lease, grant of easement, or the construction of improvements which are inconsistent with passive recreational uses. This section of the Municipal Code establishes procedural safeguards vis-a-vis City-owned open space, which requires the City Council to conduct a public hearing prior to considering a request of the type enumerated above.

**Hillside
Planned
Development
Zone (TOMC
Section 9-
4.3100 et.
seq.)**

The Hillside Planned Development (HPD) Zone was adopted in 1971. It is a residential zoning district, the regulations of which apply to all properties which have been placed in that zone through the re-zoning process. It is a "planned development" zone, allowing a limited degree of clustering of density in order to preserve larger areas of open space.

Under the provisions of this zone, the maximum density of development is regulated in inverse relationship to the average slope, and the percentage of the site which must remain as open space or be developed for recreational purposes is regulated in direct proportion to the average slope. Special design standards suited to hillside terrain are also incorporated in the ordinance.

The purpose of this zone is to encourage the retention of steep slopes, ridgelines, and other prominent natural features while permitting limited residential development. Following development, those portions of the site which have been set aside as natural open space are often transferred to public ownership. Whether they are transferred or retained by a property owners association, Open Space (OS) zoning is appropriate once the parcels have been created and restricted to open space by a development entitlement.

While this ordinance is generally appropriate for regulating hillside development and insuring the provision of open space, the slope-density table should be reviewed to consider some downward revisions to the maximum permissible density for the various slope categories, and also to consider a "sliding scale" rather than "step intervals" for relating permissible density and required open space to the parcel's average slope.

**Protected
Ridgeline
Overlay Zone
(TOMC
Section 9-
4.3500 et.
seq.)**

Adopted in 1991, this overlay zone is designed to protect ridgelines within and surrounding the community, as identified by the City's Ridgeline Study - 1988 Update, which supplemented the original Ridgeline Study prepared in 1978. Where applied to a specific property through the re-zoning process, specific development standards are established to regulate development on the site in relation to the identified ridgeline.

It should be noted that both the General Plan (General Policies and the Conservation Element) and Resolution 78-66 define the City's interest and policy to preserve the identified ridgelines wherever possible. These policies are implemented through the specific standards of the Protected Ridgeline overlay zone where applicable, or through techniques identified in the Ridgeline Study - 1988 Update on a Planning Area-wide basis.

B. Implementation of Open Space Element Policies

The purpose of this sub-chapter is to identify implementation programs for each of the open space policies established by Chapter 3. The following table presents this information, keyed back to the appropriate policy number and topic from Chapter 3. The responsibility for carrying out the programs falls with City staff in carrying out activities related to development project review, capital program planning, interaction with County, State, and Federal agencies, and through participation in COSCA.

An annual report regarding progress in the implementation of the Open Space Element should be prepared for the City Council's information and review. This report should be presented to the Council as a separate document, in conjunction with its annual review of the General Plan.

OPEN SPACE IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAMS

Policy	Topic	Implementation Program
OS-1	Conservation Element resources	Review new projects to place particularly sensitive resources, as identified by the Conservation Element, in open space areas. Continue to apply the City's Landmark Tree Preservation and Protection Ordinance.

Policy	Topic	Implementation Program
OS-2	Managed production of resources	Open Space (OS) zone precludes resource production.
OS-3	Groundwater recharge and extraction	Review of proposals to identify and evaluate all potential benefits and detriments to open space from groundwater extraction or recharge proposals. Where permitted, design groundwater recharge areas to maximize open space benefits, such as the creation of wetland areas, and provision of surface water areas for resident and migratory waterfowl.
OS-4	Land Conservation Act contracts	Administer existing application procedure for Land Conservation Act contracts.

Policy	Topic	Implementation Program
OS-5	Visitor/user impacts on open space resources	<p>Conduct field surveys of planned trail routes to avoid sensitive natural features and cultural resources.</p> <p>Design and construct trails to minimize disturbance of native vegetation.</p> <p>Use natural building materials, native plant materials, and earth-tone colors to the greatest extent possible in all fencing, trailheads, kiosks and other open space improvements.</p> <p>Minimize the use of signs in open space areas, using signs only for visitor information, safety, and resource protection.</p> <p>Locate visitor information signs, kiosks, and related improvements principally at trailheads to reduce signage within open space areas.</p> <p>Install fencing and barrier materials where appropriate to direct public access to specific entry points, control off-road vehicle access, and provide for the safe separation of visitors and horses from hazards.</p> <p>Limit the number of visitors and periods of access to areas with particularly sensitive resources.</p> <p>Close or relocate trails in areas where visitor use has adversely affected wildlife and plant habitats.</p>

Policy	Topic	Implementation Program
OS-6	Trails Master Plan implementation	<p>Through development review, secure trail rights-of-way or easements, and on-site trail construction, where such trails are designated by the Trails Master Plan.</p> <p>Participate in cooperative regional trail planning with public and private organizations to identify and develop regional trail connections.</p> <p>Allow multiple use on trails wherever feasible.</p> <p>Cooperate with the Conejo Recreation and Park District to regularly evaluate and update the master trail plan.</p> <p>Maintain an inventory of key trail/street crossings, and upgrade crossings to facilitate trail use as opportunities arise.</p> <p>Continue to foster public involvement in trail system planning, maintenance and construction through an advisory group and trail-related programs.</p>
OS-7	Impact of open space use on adjacent areas	<p>Locate trails in such a manner to minimize visual impacts on adjacent communities, including use of existing access road and paths.</p> <p>Where possible, maintain a buffer area between trails and existing residential development, including use of existing plant materials to screen trails from nearby homes.</p> <p>Develop a system of trailheads to provide adequate parking and related facilities for trail users, to avoid trail user parking on residential streets.</p> <p>Install signage at principal trail entry points where necessary to direct visitors to use only established trails and to follow other open space rules and trail use guidelines.</p>

Policy	Topic	Implementation Program
OS-8	Safety Element hazards	Designate as open space those areas within new development projects necessary to remain undeveloped for public health and safety purposes, as identified in the Safety Element.
OS-9	Maintenance of fuel modification areas	When fuel modification zones are accepted as open space by a public agency, insure that an appropriate privately funded mechanism is in place to guarantee maintenance at no cost to the general public.
OS-10	Fire protection access in open space	Continue to accommodate fire roads and helipads in open space areas where such improvements are necessary for public health and safety, while minimizing disturbance to the resources as much as possible.
OS-11	Regional open space for air quality benefits	Continue to support regional planning efforts which direct new development to cities, and preserve large open area buffers between cities.
OS-12	Ring of open space	Open space protection per sub-chapter A, above, and acquisition per Chapter 6 (Financial Plan).
OS-13	Ring of open space as a planning principle	Insure that General Plan and other publications appropriately describe and depict the ring of open space.
OS-14	Greenbelt agreements and other regional plans	Continue support of the Tierra Rejada Greenbelt Agreement. Continue support of the Thousand Oaks Area Plan. Support other inter-agency agreements which foster achievement of regional open space policies.
OS-15	Federal and State open space	Monitor State and Federal acquisition and management activities and register City support where appropriate.
OS-16	Regional policies (e.g., Guidelines for Orderly Development)	OS-11 implementation program is applicable.

Policy	Topic	Implementation Program
OS-17	Retention of open space in perpetuity	<p>Continue re-zoning of natural open space lands to the Open Space (OS) Zone.</p> <p>Retain the majority of natural open space in public ownership.</p> <p>Where privately-owned natural open space is appropriate, require deed restrictions, with the City as a beneficiary, to protect open space resources in perpetuity.</p>
OS-18	Public ownership of open space	<p>Continue to require significant natural open space set aside through the development process to be dedicated in fee title to a public agency for long term stewardship.</p> <p>Continue to enable public ownership and management of natural open space through continued participation in the Conejo Open Space Conservation Agency.</p>
OS-19	Public hearing before disposition or lease of open space	<p>Request the adoption of a policy by the Conejo Open Space Conservation Agency and Conejo Recreation and Park District to require a public hearing by its governing body prior to disposition or long-term use of natural open space which is incompatible with passive recreation uses.</p>
OS-20	Privately-owned open space	<p>Acquire conservation easements, or apply deed restrictions to private natural open space, with the City as a beneficiary, in order to protect open space resources in perpetuity.</p> <p>Acquire trail easements over private natural open space areas, where necessary, to retain public trail access to and between open space lands.</p>
OS-21	Transfer of open space to COSCA	<p>Periodically review privately-owned natural open space lands on a periodic basis to ensure the long-term protection of open space resources.</p> <p>Identify and transfer natural open space lands owned by the City and Conejo Recreation and Park District to the Conejo Open Space Conservation Agency, after concurrence by the governing boards of each agency.</p>

Policy	Topic	Implementation Program
OS-22	Open Space zoning	Continue re-zoning natural open space lands to the O-S (Open Space) Zone.
OS-23	Roads in open space	The Circulation Element presently depicts appropriate road locations within open space. Review proposed amendments to the Circulation Element to avoid negative impact to open space resources. Proposed road easements potentially affecting open space lands shall carefully reviewed to avoid or minimize impact on open space resources. Where approved, easements should be described and identified on the recorded tract map or land division, and in related development permits, at the time of dedication.
OS-24	Protection of natural resources	Existing road easements across open space land shall be reviewed and may be relocated if desirable to avoid or minimize impact on open space resources. Identify and avoid natural resources of particular importance or sensitivity, and cultural resources, during the development of plans to accommodate visitor use. Emphasize the importance of natural resource protection in educational materials related to recreational use of open space.
OS-25	Visitor facilities and public utilities in open space	Encourage research projects by recognized institutions that will contribute to a data base on local open space resource characteristics and recreational use patterns. Implementation program OS-5 is applicable.

Policy	Topic	Implementation Program
OS-26	Protection and enhancement of habitat in open space	<p>Inventory significant plant and animal habitats within open space areas for potential restoration or enhancement, including an assessment of the costs and benefits of such restoration on a site-specific basis.</p> <p>Seek grants and other special funding sources for prioritized plant and animal habitat restoration or enhancement.</p>
OS-27	Protection of open space from damage from unauthorized activities	<p>Inventory and prioritize natural open space areas damaged by off-road vehicles, dumping or other activities and develop site-specific measures to reduce such activity.</p> <p>Systematically implement a program to construct fencing or other barriers where indicated by the inventory.</p> <p>Install appropriate signage and coordinate enforcement of ordinances related to illegal dumping and off-road vehicle use in open space with the Ventura County Sheriff's Department.</p>
OS-28	Water quality protection	<p>Collaborate with other City departments and responsible agencies to develop a monitoring program of water quality in principal creeks and streams within open space areas.</p> <p>Install signage and other improvements and regulate use as necessary to avoid adverse impacts to water quality from recreational activities in open space.</p> <p>Develop a program to periodically clean streamside areas of trash and other foreign debris deposited during stormwater flows.</p> <p>Review new development to impose conditions necessary to protect downstream water quality.</p>

Policy	Topic	Implementation Program
OS-29	Trail use	<p>Plan trails collaboratively with the Conejo Recreation and Park District to maximize the visitor's experience and minimize impacts to natural resources.</p> <p>Design and develop trails to be multiple-use wherever such use does not adversely affect trail user safety or trail improvements.</p> <p>Continue efforts to communicate responsible trail use concepts to the community through a variety of media.</p> <p>If necessary, develop regulations regarding trail use in consultation with other local agencies and the Conejo Open Space Trails Advisory Committee.</p>
OS-30	Utility lines and flood control facilities	<p>Continue to work with utility companies and agencies, and the Ventura County Flood Control District to accommodate utility lines and flood control facilities where such improvements are necessary for public health and safety, while minimizing disturbance to open space resources.</p>
OS-31	Protection of natural drainage courses	<p>Manage open space and control adjacent development so as to preclude wherever possible the need for flood control improvements within natural drainage courses. Where such facilities are unavoidable for public safety reasons, use innovative design and construction techniques to minimize impact on open space resources.</p>

Policy	Topic	Implementation Program
OS-32	Impact of new development on open space	Inventory and avoid sensitive natural and cultural resources wherever possible in all new development.
		Where feasible, include transition areas in new development projects between natural open space and developed areas.
		Restore ground disturbances, including roads and trails not part of the trail system, and remove debris foreign to the natural environment in areas to be dedicated as natural open space.
		Control access to open space from streets and other access ways through fencing or other appropriate barriers where needed; preclude residential lot access to open space through non-gated fences or walls.
		Install stepovers, gates or other barriers at all trailhead entry locations to control trail access.
		Create separate lots outside natural open space areas to include all fuel modification zones as required by the Fire Protection District, with maintenance responsibility exercised and controlled by private landowners, according to City policies.
		Review and provide comments on environmental documents for development projects in adjoining cities and unincorporated areas that could have impact on open space within the Planning Area.

CHAPTER 6

FINANCIAL PLAN TO ACQUIRE AND MANAGE OPEN SPACE

Chapter 4 delineated the open space system, including those areas with important open space resources for future protection (subchapter C). As indicated in the descriptions of those resources, many areas can be preserved through the development review process, in which those portions of a proposed development which contain protected resources can be set aside as open space, with the remainder of the parcel developed in a manner consistent with the General Plan and underlying zoning. In several instances, however, lands for future open space protection identified in Chapter 4 are not expected to be reserved as open space during the development review process, principally for two reasons:

1. The land has already been subdivided and reasonable development permissible under law and zoning will not provide large contiguous open space areas meeting the objectives of the General Plan. Examples include Mountclef Ridge, Southern Ridge, and Skyline areas.
2. The land would be a desirable addition to the ring of open space but has already been designated for development by the General Plan and the underlying zoning or Specific Plan. An example is the Western Plateau area.

In these instances, it may be necessary for the City or COSCA to purchase an interest in the property to preserve its open space character. This sub-chapter identifies financial strategies and resources which may be available in such cases.

Where the City or other public agency is considering the acquisition of an open space area by purchase, its relative significance for open space purposes should first be evaluated using the open space evaluation criteria adopted by COSCA (please refer to Appendix B), as those criteria may be amended in the future.

**Open Space,
Conservation,
and Scenic
Easements,
Acquisition of
Development
Rights**

An easement is a right granted by a property owner to another, either with or without monetary consideration, which gives the other party certain rights. An open space, conservation, or scenic easement is a tool which should be used where outright acquisition of the open space is not desirable or possible, and where the property owner is willing to place certain restrictions on the property which limit its use in such a way that the desirable open space character is preserved. The cost of the easement may be less than outright acquisition, depending upon the development rights retained by the owner under the easement agreement. A similar tool is the acquisition of all development rights. This may be desirable where it is appropriate that the open space remain in private ownership (e.g., a small parcel internal to a tract), but it is in the public interest to fully restrict any potential future development.

**City General
Fund -
Bedroom Tax**

Municipal Code Section 3-16.01 et. seq. (Fees in Connection with the Construction of Dwelling Units) levies a tax on new residential construction, varying from \$100 to \$200 per dwelling unit, depending upon the number of bedrooms in the residence. Revenue from this tax is placed in a Special Capital Outlay Fund for "the acquisition, improvement, and development of open space, public parks, parkways, and median islands..." Future revenues accruing to this fund at the present tax rate are expected to total approximately \$1,400,000 over the next 20-25 years to buildout of the Planning Area. A measure to increase the tax rate, which has not been changed since the tax was enacted in 1972, to a range of \$400 to \$800 per dwelling unit has been placed on the November, 1996, ballot. The City should allocate revenue from this tax to open space acquisition to the greatest extent possible.

**Transient
Occupancy
Tax or Other
General Fund
Revenue
Source**

The transient occupancy tax is levied on hotel and motel room charges within the City. It presently generates approximately \$1,200,000 per year in revenue to the City's General Fund. Revenue from this and other General Fund sources (the largest of which is the sales tax) are available to the City Council.

Tax Foreclosure Sales	Occasionally properties which have been identified as valuable open space acquisitions become available through tax foreclosure sales. The City has recently acquired some parcels in the Skyline Open Space Area through this method, and should continue to actively monitor sale announcements. This method may be particularly applicable to smaller parcels in older subdivisions.
Open Space Acquisition Bond Issue	Where a large amount of money is needed to acquire one or more parcels for open space purposes, and there is substantial community support (2/3 voter approval at an election is required in order to approve such a measure), this option may be viable.
Open Space Maintenance Districts	The City has used this technique with large land developments where open space is dedicated pursuant to a specific plan or subdivision map. A special district is established which levies an annual assessment on the owners of other property within the Specific Plan or subdivision, to provide funds to maintain the dedicated open space. The major portion of such maintenance is typically brush clearance.
Grants	Although grant funding available from higher levels of government in 1996 is scarce and subject to significant competition where it does exist, the City and other local agencies should continue to monitor and apply for such funding for open space acquisition.
Donations and Bargain Sales	Donations and bargain sales, in which the property owner sells the property for less than appraised value (essentially a partial donation), can provide tax advantages to the owner, as well as valuable open space which might not otherwise be acquired. Many of COSCA's early acquisitions were donations by the Prudential Insurance Company.
Sale/ leasebacks	Public agencies can acquire open space at less than market value via a sale/leaseback, in which the seller continues to use a portion of the property for a period of time, or as a life estate.

**Golf Course
Revenues**

In its action earlier this year to increase fees at the Los Robles Municipal Golf Course, the City Council stated its intent to increase fees for non-resident golfers by an additional \$2.00 per round after the planned renovation of the Golf Course is complete, with the additional revenue generated by this fee increase targeted for maintenance of open space.

APPENDIX A

Article 10.5. Open-Space Lands

65560. (a) "Local open-space plan" is the open-space element of a county or city general plan adopted by the board or council, either as the local open-space plan or as the interim local open-space plan adopted pursuant to Section 65563.

Definitions

(b) "Open-space land" is any parcel or area of land or water which is essentially unimproved and devoted to an open-space use as defined in this section, and which is designated on a local, regional or state open-space plan as any of the following:

(1) Open space for the preservation of natural resources including, but not limited to, areas required for the preservation of plant and animal life, including habitat for fish and wildlife species; areas required for ecologic and other scientific study purposes; rivers, streams, bays and estuaries; and coastal beaches, lakeshores, banks of rivers and streams, and watershed lands.

(2) Open space used for the managed production of resources, including but not limited to, forest lands, rangeland, agricultural lands and areas of economic importance for the production of food or fiber; areas required for recharge of ground water basins; bays, estuaries, marshes, rivers and streams which are important for the management of commercial fisheries; and areas containing major mineral deposits, including those in short supply.

(3) Open space for outdoor recreation, including but not limited to, areas of outstanding scenic, historic and cultural value; areas particularly suited for park and recreation purposes, including access to lakeshores, beaches, and rivers and streams; and areas which serve as links between major recreation and open-space reservations, including utility easements, banks of rivers and streams, trails, and scenic highway corridors.

(4) Open space for public health and safety. including, but not limited to, areas which require

special management or regulation because of hazardous or special conditions such as earthquake fault zones, unstable soil areas, flood plains, watersheds, areas presenting high fire risks, areas required for the protection of water quality and water reservoirs and areas required for the protection and enhancement of air quality.

(*Repealed and added by Stats. 1972, Ch. 251. Effective June 30, 1972.*)

Policy

65561. The Legislature finds and declares as follows:

(a) That the preservation of open-space land, as defined in this article, is necessary not only for the maintenance of the economy of the state, but also for the assurance of the continued availability of land for the production of food and fiber, for the enjoyment of scenic beauty, for recreation and for the use of natural resources.

(b) That discouraging premature and unnecessary conversion of open-space land to urban uses is a matter of public interest and will be of benefit to urban dwellers because it will discourage non-contiguous development patterns which unnecessarily increase the costs of community services to community residents.

(c) That the anticipated increase in the population of the state demands that cities, counties, and the state at the earliest possible date make definite plans for the preservation of valuable open-space land and take positive action to carry out such plans by the adoption and strict administration of laws, ordinances, rules and regulations as authorized by this chapter or by other appropriate methods.

(d) That in order to assure that the interests of all its people are met in the orderly growth and development of the state and the preservation and conservation of its resources, it is necessary to provide for the development by the state, regional agencies, counties and cities, including charter cities, of statewide coordinated plans for the conservation and preservation of open-space lands.

(e) That for these reasons this article is necessary for the promotion of the general welfare and for the protection of the public interest in open-space land.

(*Added by Stats. 1970, Ch. 1590.*)

Intent

65562. It is the intent of the Legislature in enacting this article:

(a) To assure that cities and counties recognize that open-space land is a limited and valuable resource which must be conserved wherever possible.

(b) To assure that every city and county will prepare and carry out open-space plans which, along with state and regional open-space plans, will accomplish the objectives of a comprehensive open-space program.

(*Added by Stats. 1970, Ch. 1590.*)

Deadlines for adoption and submission of plans

65563. On or before December 31, 1973, every city and county shall prepare, adopt and submit to the Secretary of the Resources Agency a local open-space plan for the comprehensive and long-range preservation and conservation of open-space land within its jurisdiction. Every city and county shall by August 31, 1972, prepare, adopt and submit to the Secretary of the Resources Agency, an interim open-space plan, which shall be in effect until December 31, 1973, containing, but not limited to, the following:

(a) The officially adopted goals and policies which will guide the preparation and implementation of the open-space plan; and

(b) A program for orderly completion and adoption of the open-space plan by December 31, 1973, including a description of the methods by which open-space resources will be inventoried and conservation measures determined.

(*Amended by Stats. 1973, Ch. 120. Effective June 29, 1973.*)

Implementation

65564. Every local open-space plan shall contain an action program consisting of specific programs which the legislative body intends to pursue in implementing its open-space plan.

(*Added by Stats. 1970, Ch. 1590.*)

Consistency of acquisitions, disposal and regulation

65566. Any action by a county or city by which open-space land or any interest therein is acquired or disposed of or its use restricted or regulated, whether or not pursuant to this part, must be consistent with the local open-space plan.

(*Added by Stats. 1970, Ch. 1590.*)

Consistency of building permits, subdivision maps, zoning

65567. No building permit may be issued, no subdivision map approved, and no open-space zoning ordinance adopted, unless the proposed construction, subdivision or ordinance is consistent with the local open-space plan.

(*Added by Stats. 1970, Ch. 1590.*)

APPENDIX B

**Conejo Open Space Conservation Agency
Property Evaluation Criteria
(adopted July 22, 1992)**

A. Development probability value

- | | | |
|---|----------|--|
| 0 | none | not developable. |
| 2 | moderate | developable under General Plan and zoning. |
| 3 | high | pending plans or development proposals. |

Discussion:

B. Scenic value

- | | | |
|---|--------|---|
| 1 | low | no outstanding visual resources. |
| 2 | medium | some alteration of visual resources; limited scenic quality. |
| 3 | high | no alteration of visual resources; contains significant scenic resources such as rock outcrops, waterfalls, visual diversity. |

Discussion:

C. Public accessibility value

- | | | |
|---|---------|---|
| 0 | none | no access feasible or it's use is restricted due to presence of sensitive vegetation, wildlife resources or archaeological resources. |
| 2 | limited | limited access and use due to restricted parking, equestrian access, existing easements, and trail connections. |
| 3 | full | existing, adequate access and trail systems; use probably high. |

Discussion:

D. "Ring-concept" value

1	low	not a part of planned open space "ring".
2	medium	part of planned open space "ring".
3	high	key component of open space "ring".

Discussion:

E. Historic value

0	none	no historic resources.
2	moderate	potential candidates for designation as a local community landmark or historic feature.
3	high	recorded County Historical Landmarks present on-site.

Discussion:

F. Archaeological resource value

0	none	no known archaeological resources
2	moderate	archaeological areas which have sustained some damage or physical impact.
3	important	archaeological sites which have been recorded and are to be permanently preserved; significant cultural resources determined by Native Americans and professional archaeologists based on previous research.

Discussion:

G. Trail system value

0	none	slope angle/geologic conditions inappropriate.
2	medium	potential trail access or linkage.
3	high	priority trail linkages with high potential use, access to important areas.

Discussion:

H. Potential liability value

0	none	areas with critical and unmitigable liability issues.
2	moderate	areas with moderate liability issues affecting open space users or adjacent property owners, including, but not limited to, geological hazards, hazardous waste, and flood hazards.
3	high	no significant liability issues on-site.

Discussion:

I. Water resource value

1	low	no surface water.
2	medium	stream channels with intermittent stream flow.
3	high	stream channels with permanent surface water-streams, lakes, ponds and springs.

Discussion:

J. Floristic diversity value

1	low	disturbed non-native vegetation with low floristic diversity.
2	medium	native vegetation types with moderate floristic diversity.
3	high	native vegetation types with high floristic diversity or restricted distribution.

Discussion:

K. Wildlife habitat value

1	low	isolated habitats with low wildlife species diversity.
2	medium	relatively undisturbed habitats with moderate wildlife species diversity.
3	high	important habitats containing high wildlife species diversity, important nesting sites, foraging areas or migratory corridors.

Discussion:

L. Rare and endangered species value

0	none	no rare or endangered species.
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2	moderate	suitable habitat for rare or endangered species.
3	high	known existence of rare or endangered species.

Discussion:

M. Adjacent land use impact value

0	none	critical impacts to site from adjacent land use.
2	moderate	significant impacts to potential site, including visual impacts, noise, water pollution, and air quality.
3	high	no significant adverse impacts from adjacent land use.

Discussion:

N. Open space proximity value

0	low	isolated parcel not close to existing parks/open space areas.
2	moderate	near but not adjacent to existing parks/open space areas.
3	high	adjacent to existing parks / open space areas.

Discussion:

O. Acquisition cost:

1	low	high cost compared to other open space-related acquisitions by public agencies.
2	moderate	cost comparable to other open space-related acquisitions by public agencies.
3	high	low cost compared to other open space-related acquisitions by public agencies.

Discussion:

P. Maintenance cost:

0	low	high maintenance cost- known brush clearance requirements and/or significant site improvements.
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- | | | |
|---|----------|--|
| 2 | moderate | moderate maintenance cost- minor improvements or potential brush clearance requirements. |
| 3 | high | low maintenance cost- no improvements or brush clearance requirements. |

Discussion:

U.C. BERKELEY LIBRARIES



C124915090

